Roderick Coover

History in *Dust*

Left: the filmmaker; Right: Nikolina Kujaca and Davis Wenham in *Dust*.

Dust (2001), Macedonian filmmaker Milcho Manchevski's second feature, is an anachronistic and iconoclastic crosscultural "baklava Western" that explores what happens when West meets East in the violent history of the Balkans. The film takes viewers on a wild ride across time and space that begins in contemporary New York City, goes back to the American Wild West, and then to the Macedonian revolution of 1903, where two American cowboys find themselves caught up in a battle between Macedonian revolutionaries, Greek and Albanian bandits, and the ruling Turkish military. *Dust* opened at the Venice Film Festival in 2001 and has since spurred essays, articles, and even a major conference. The film offers one of the first cinematic presentations of regional history from a Macedonian perspective. Incorporating the filmmaker's historical research, it paints a visceral and violent picture of how alliances between the Turkish oppressors and Greek clergy, and terrible acts committed by Albanian and Greek bandits, shaped Macedonia's history and sense of identity. The film was made independently with European funds following Manchevski's falling out with Miramax over control of the picture and, despite its Western themes and international recognition, it had difficulty finding American distribution. It was only introduced to a few American markets in 2003, when Lion's Gate purchased the U.S. distribution rights.

Dust is a long-awaited successor to Manchevski's Oscar-nominated debut feature, *Before the Rain* (1994), which presented a tragic set of stories about love and violence in modern Europe. In the wake of an infamous outburst of violence in Macedonia, the segmented narrative of *Before the Rain* follows three love stories that take place in war-torn Macedonia and far away in London. In both features, Manchevski uses diverse characters and a fragmented narrative structure to create a mosaic in which the details of history are

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An Interview with Milcho Manchevski

Left: Labina Mitevska in *Before the Rain*; Right: Katrin Cartlidge and Rade Serbedzija in *Before the Rain*.

subjective, contradictory, and illusory, and recollections are repeatedly altered to suit the desires of the storytellers or the narrative structures of the stories that they want to tell. In *Dust*, Manchevski carries this approach to abstract and surreal dimensions. The histories that the characters present seem to change at whim, and the characters even insert themselves into events that would have occurred long before they were born. The surreal qualities of their stories are enhanced by dream sequences, bizarre anachronisms, faux archival recordings, and strange settings. Manchevski also combines black-and-white and color film to play with audience expectations about what is past and present. In these ways, the filmmaker intentionally undermines "a basic author-viewer contract," as Manchevski describes it, "that the film will maintain a unified tone and surface like an old-fashioned painting."

The Macedonian-born Manchevski studied film in the U.S. at the University of Southern Illinois and is now a professor in the Graduate Film Program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Manchevski, who has also created performance works, paintings, documentary photo exhibits, and written novels and stories, frequently draws on visual and literary models for his cinematography. In *Dust*, he moves between painterly styles, saturating some scenes in the textures and colors of dust and blood, while making other scenes sparse. The filmmaker also plays with the authority of documentary photography; in *Dust*, photos are records of a past which, as the stories unfold, we realize might never have happened. The photographs are only as true as the tales in which they reside.

Audiences enter Manchevski's world of *Dust* as intruders. The film begins with a break-in: Edge, a young criminal, searches through a dark apartment for loot, but instead finds a gun-toting old woman named Angela, whose quickness on the draw already suggests an unusual past. Holding Edge at gunpoint, Angela tells

a story of two brothers, Luke and Elijah, who live in the Wild West around the time of Angela's birth. After Luke sleeps with his brother's wife, he flees to Macedonia (then under the rule of the Turks as a part of the Ottoman Empire), where he becomes a bounty hunter and pursues a revolutionary warrior known as "The Teacher." Elijah pursues Luke. Arriving in 1903 Europe at the end of the cowboy era, they are characters caught out of time.

Despite his faithfulness to his research, Manchevski says he is more concerned with how differing versions of the same past are constructed (and what they tell us about the individuals caught in such moments of conflict) than with any particular historical or political overview. He questions the nature of cinematic evidence: "Once I set the film where I set it, I felt it was my responsibility to portray the times and the human elements—behavior, language, costume, relationships, attitudes, body language—with as much accuracy as possible, since, for better or worse, film is way too often taken as a record of the times. Sort of the way paintings and frescos were treated hundreds of years ago—people thought, if we see it painted here, it must've happened. So, the paintings were used to tell a lot of lies."

Manchevski mixes old photos, film clips from the silent era, and faux historical clips he has created, to show how history is an anachronistic product of the imagination. In one scene, Luke unknowingly steps between a movie projector and the screen to become a spectacle of the fading world of the Wild West from which he comes, and in another scene, he reappears almost 50 years after his death to haunt his aging brother. Viewers soon discover that Angela is an unreliable narrator who will place herself in scenes occurring before she is even born. Her subjectivity helps draw into question the value of archival evidence in judging the past. Historical referents are continually mixed, remixed, and altered in the act of storytelling: events are comically and tragically exaggerated, and at times even retold with entirely different endings.

By way of Angela's tale-telling and through the adventures of two American gunslingers, Manchevski offers a distinctly Macedonian perspective of Balkan history. Viewers enter into what Manchevski represents as a heroic (if also tragic) period in Macedonia's struggle for independence, violently quashed by the Turkish, Greek, and Albanian players in the region. Their violence is widespread and indiscriminate. The groups of bandits and bounty hunters seem to attack each other as much as the guerrilla fighters they are meant to be pursuing, resulting in, literally, a bloody mess. This violence is equaled only by the fighting between the Turkish soldiers and the revolutionary warriors; the Turkish responses to guerrilla attacks are ruthless. Manchevski shows the Greek complicity with the brutal practices of the Turks; an Orthodox priest even accompanies the Turkish major during one of the film's most violent scenes. Meanwhile, only one negative image of "The Teacher" moderates the Macedonian's otherwise heroic image, and the other Macedonians are shown as noble but powerless. Yet out of this free-for-all come unexpected discoveries as the protagonists make choices about how to survive and what to fight for; mercenary ambitions are challenged by acts of brutal violence, courage, and love.

For as much as *Dust* is a story about war and violence, it is also a film about different varieties of love. In the frame story, Angela becomes a kind of mother figure for Edge, just as she is also mother to the story. When her health falters, Edge cares for her, and eventually adopts her story as his own, carrying it forward to a new generation. *Dust* is a story about brotherly love, in this case of love gone wrong, corrupted by Luke's ultimately tragic act of having sex with his brother's wife. In Macedonia, *Dust* also becomes a story about selfless love, and about societal or patriotic love. But perhaps *Dust* is most significantly a film about Manchevski's love for the act of storytelling, which passionately endures despite violence and loss.

RODERICK COOVER: Dust *is a film about storytelling and history that takes place in worlds not usually thought of together—contemporary New York City, the American Wild West, and the Macedonian revolution. What did you learn from the contrasts between those different worlds?*

MILCHO MANCHEVSKI: Contrast is good. It's good for drama, and good for art. I learned that there is more in common than you would think, and this is probably the result of our need to create little or big clichés, since life seems to be easier to explain away that way. In addition, in *Dust* I was aiming for a story which incorporates the structure of the story itself as a crucial element of the story.

On paper, Macedonia under Ottoman rule and the Wild West sounded like an outrageous combination, but when I started doing the research and then filming, the two places felt like they could go together. The original inspiration came when I saw there were com-

Joseph Fiennes as Elijah and David Wenham as Luke.

mon elements in the iconography of the Macedonian revolution at the turn of the century that are visually similar to that of the Wild West and of the Mexican revolutionaries and bandits, with their long beards, bandoliers, and white horses. It is as if they all shopped in the same boutique. The warriors seemed to draw on many of the same ideals of a warrior code, at least visually.

I discovered things that seemed surreal when seen through the eyes of somebody who frequently watches Western movies, things like the fact that Billy the Kid was from Brooklyn, the fact that cowboys and Indians rarely fought because by the time the cowboys came into being there weren't many Indians left in the area—Texas and Oklahoma—or the fact that General Custer was one of the worst students ever to attend West Point.

In doing research, I also discovered that there were actually Americans coming to Macedonia. The American writer Albert Sonnichsen, who had previously been in the war in the Philippines (like an earlier and lesser-known John Reed), fought in the Macedonian revolution for a period of six months and returned to San Francisco to write a book about it called *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*. He even carried a camera with him, and traded processing chemicals with the leader of the rebels. Sonnichsen (or a nastier version of him) could be the prototype for Luke, had not Luke been written before I found out about him. Reality did its best to support this piece of fiction. Contemporary New York felt like the right third side of the triangle—it is equally different from each of the two. On a more personal level, all three are integral parts of who I am.

What happens as the story of a battle between brothers in the Wild West is told in the East, in Macedonia? The only difference is the fact that both brothers are away from home. When you are in a familiar environment it is softer. There in Macedonia, the brothers' conflict became harsher. Placing the archetypes in new contexts means questioning them as elements in how you tell a story. They can become richer, or they can deflate. It is sort of like a Robert Rauschenberg print: a piece of it could be found-art and another piece made from a photograph, some of it is an actual brushstroke, but what really matters is what these pieces tell you as a whole—when you step back—rather than what they tell you on their own.

However, I think all films are about people and not about the grand ideas underpinning the films. This became a film about a very old woman, almost 100 years old, telling a story—and we don't know how much of it she is making up—about a thief who is, in a way, us (the listener), about two brothers in the Wild West who travel to Macedonia, about an immigrant prostitute, about a revolutionary, and about his pregnant wife. *Dust* is about the thirst to hear stories and, more importantly, to tell stories. We seem to learn a great deal about how to behave from the stories we hear in life.

Edge is us, the viewer. He is also the character who changes the most. In the process of storytelling, Angela becomes the mother to Edge and to the narrative. She doesn't have any children, but the story is hers. She adopts the thief as if to pass her story on in the few days she has left. In both *Dust* and *Before The Rain*, the women are the strong characters despite the male posturing and guns. The women support the infrastructure of what is going on. Just as in life. Edge is

Nikolina Kujaca as Neda.

the listener of the story who then takes it on as his own. The story is a virus, I guess. You give it to someone else and change it in the process. Edge is us.

At first Edge shows ambivalence to the past Angela talks about. His ambivalence seems to reflect that of the audience, who must learn the value of history.
There is incredible resistance to hearing history today. I don't know whether it was that way 100 years ago. But today history is almost a dirty word. Somehow anything older than the moment now is not interesting, is not cool, is not sweet. It goes with being more selfish, less embarrassed. I find that sad. Research is so much fun and at the same time it can be really dirty, perverse, unexpected, and yet somehow true. It can confirm what Tolstoy said: "History would be a great thing, if it were only true."

In Dust *there are different approaches to storytelling, including the use of surrealistic images, movements across history, and seeming anachronisms. At one point an airplane flies over the gunslingers, at another Freud appears as a side character.*
We cannot ignore the knowledge of new movements in art, pretending as if film is just technology. We can stay stuck in pseudo-realism, but then we cheat ourselves out of great possibilities. However, part of what we see in *Dust*, which seems surreal, is actually historical. Time has compressed itself, and it's only our perception of time that tries to separate the past into different drawers and files. The end of the Ottoman Empire still seems like the Middle Ages, we think the Wild West is the nineteenth century, the airplanes are twentieth century, and Freud, well, he's almost twenty-first century . . . but they all exist at about the same time. 1903 was the year of the first flight of the Wright brothers, it was when the Macedonian revolution against the Ottoman Empire happened, the time that the Wild West was just becoming history. That's the year that *The Great Train Robbery* was filmed. It is only a couple years after the Spanish-American War in Cuba, yet only four years before the first Cubist painting and only five or six years before Freud came to visit America. So, all of this was happening at the same time.

It is just our perception of history that these events belong to different worlds—it is as if we have a need to turn things into clichés. Having said this, there is the additional compression of time because Angela, the storyteller, is a contemporary of the twentieth century; she was born at the beginning of the century, and she is nearing death at the end of it. There is also a little scene which takes place in 1945, just after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Film is ideal to play with time—on the most physical level you can convert time into space. One second of time becomes 24 frames—which is a length of space. Whenever you edit, you shuffle it in order to create the illusion of continuous time. In *Dust* I explored that basic effect, but while keeping it still playful and easy to watch. Because when I go see films I would like to think there is a silent contract between the viewer and the filmmaker by which the filmmaker is not going to be too overbearing and I as a viewer am going to have fun while we go on this strange ride.

Is there also a political reason why you found it interesting or important to mix genres the way that you did?

Rosemary Murphy as Angela and Adrian Lester as Edge.

The delineation of different cultures in our heads is very often only prejudice and racism. People are very similar and they behave in similar ways—it is only our fear and ignorance that speaks of "French this" and "Japanese that" and "Macedonian that." So in trying to confront and crash several genres, several places, and several times, I was hoping to awaken the critical eye in the beholder to the possibilities of transcultural similarities and prejudices in reading human behavior and art.

More importantly, I was also trying to work with a synthesis of what we've learned in storytelling so far. Perhaps film never fully tried to explore the roads pointed to by James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Schönberg, or Picasso and Braque, but we cannot ignore these ideas anymore, we cannot pretend we live in the nineteenth century. Yet, that is precisely what most mainstream film today does: stuck with a retelling of a cheap version of a nineteenth-century novel.

You show a great attention to fluids, which draws attention to the title of the film.
Well, the film is called *Dust* because there is no Western without dust and also because it asks, "What do we leave behind when we are gone?" There is a line in the film that says, "Where does your voice go when you are no more?" So, what do we leave behind? Do we leave children? Or photographs? Or recorded moving images? Or stories? Or ashes? Dust? You will notice that the film is very dry. It is very yellow and very dusty. We used tons of dust and flour to get that look. That dryness was also a symbol of being alone, of being ashes. And, wherever there are moments of communal life or communal happiness, it happens around water—around a river or people who are washing each other. Being with someone is like being in water; it is comfortable and brings life. By contrast, if it is too dry, you die.

Dust *is a very violent film about a male world; men cause death not only to other men but also to the women they meet, which is something we saw in* Before the Rain. *How does this male aggression play out in Macedonia or, for that matter, in the contemporary story in the film?*
Ingmar Bergman says something like this: "Violence in film is a perfectly legitimate way of ritualizing violence in society." I like seeing good, adult action-violence in movies. Not sadistic, passive violence. There is something exhilarating about action-violence precisely because it is the movies and not real life. I am terrified of any kind of violence in real life, but putting violence in film is a way of exorcising it. The violence in *Dust* also has a very strong counterpoint in the selfless actions and love that the film also shows.

On a smaller, purely cinematic level, action-violence presents such cinematic potential because it is very kinetic. There is so much movement—and there are many aspects as to how you can portray action-violence, including what happens to the characters just before and just after. The real issue is not what, but how. I find the portrayal of violence in movies questionable when it is treated as easy. Perhaps it is a question of what you are left with at the end of a violent scene or violent film. Do you walk away with a complex feeling or a simple one?

When there is violence in a Schwarzenegger or Stallone film it is very easy and clean, which I think is problematic. People are shot, and then gone. The hero takes real pleasure in it. Unless you are shot in the brain

or the heart you don't die on the spot, so what happens during those 20 seconds, or 20 minutes, or two days, while you are dying on the spot? Are you shocked? Do you cry? Do you puke? Do you curse? Do you beg for mercy? Do you get a hard-on? Do you think about the separation of church and state? What happens? When I see a guy stepping on a mine, flying through the air, then standing up and picking up his own arm with the other hand—and he's not even aware of the fact that it is his own arm he is holding—that is a different kind of thinking.

There also seemed to be a fluid movement between the conscious and unconscious—between the seemingly natural and the surreal. After people die, their spirits live on with the other characters for a period, or a character on the edge of death might enter briefly into some other world before returning to the world of the living.

Yes, it's fun to weave shadows and documents into one—again, as in a Rauschenberg print. It is the cumulative effect that counts, the overall tone, and not the elements. The jolt between different tones in the film (from a comic moment to pathos, from violent to absurd, from documentary to surreal) is more of a shock to the system, I believe, than the jolt one experiences between different genres within the same film. It is the shifts in tone, not the shifts in narrative, that dislodge us.

This is where *Dust* becomes difficult to the conservative viewer: the shifts in tone are not something mainstream and art-narrative film endorse. On the contrary, the tone is sacred. You should either laugh, or be scared, or be inspired: Don't confuse me.

Yet, because of my temperament, and perhaps because I consider film to be such a narrative thing, the free-wheeling and fluid movement between the document and the surreal, between the subconscious and the historical, are meticulously mapped out. They should feel like music, and the process of initial creation is irrational, like when I listen to music, but the actual construction is a lot of hard building-work. . . .

At this point I feel like making a film would be worthwhile only for the process of writing. Shooting would be worth it only as observing in disguise, observing how things are and how things do, rather than creating from the outside. I am very ambivalent about making films. I am not sure it is worth the trouble. On one level there is the pragmatic pressure because film is very expensive. It takes a long time to raise the money. It's technological, and there are a lot of people and a lot of egos involved in making a film. Since it seems so easy and so glamorous, film attracts some of the worst characters, people with the morals of Medusa.

On another level, there is the issue of having to tell a story in a certain legible way with certain types (and number) of characters and certain kinds of endings—even when you are not working in Hollywood. That's a lot of pressure on something that pretends to be a creative art. In actuality, we are all employed in the circus industry, and we pretend we are Shakespeares.

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Dust is distributed on film, video and DVD by Lion's Gate Films (http://www.lionsgatefilms.com) and is commonly available at major video and internet outlets. Information about the film is available at the website, http://www.realitymacedonia.org.mk, and on Milcho Manchevski's own website, http://www.manchevski.com.mk, where readers will also find excerpts of Manchevski's fiction, photography, art, and links to essays and conference papers generated by his films.

Abstract Macedonian filmmaker Milcho Manchevski reflects on the nature of history, story-telling, and photographic evidence in a discussion of *Before the Rain* (1994) and his latest feature, *Dust* (2001/2003), a genre-crossing "Baklava Western" that explores what happens when West meets East in the violent history of the Balkans.

Marsha Kinder

Reinventing the Motherland
Almodóvar's Brain-Dead Trilogy

Auteurism in the Global Age: A Prologue

An earlier version of this paper was first presented in Cuenca in November 2003 at an international congress on Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar, a fascinating event co-sponsored by his production company El Deseo and the University of Castilla-La Mancha. The conference was designed to launch the new Almodóvar studies center at UCLM, a relatively new Spanish school located near his native village in La Mancha, which will make all of his papers and production materials accessible to scholars from any part of the world. A secondary goal was to demonstrate his status as a major world-class auteur to those Spanish critics and scholars who, despite (or perhaps because of) his enormous commercial and critical success

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worldwide, are still reluctant to take his work seriously. Thus, each day of the conference featured an international panel organized and moderated by a scholar from a different nation who had already written about Almodóvar's achievements—Román Gubern from Spain, Paul Julian Smith from England, Fréderic Strauss (the editor of *Cahiers du cinéma*) from France, and myself from the United States.

What was most fascinating about the conference was the way Almodóvar and his production company were blatantly controlling the auteurist discourse surrounding his films. This conference revealed their masterful negotiation of a complex network of local, regional, national, and international relations within the changing global film scene and the several ironies this mastery generates. On the one hand, in the world market Almodóvar is unquestionably the most successful Spanish filmmaker of all time, with the greatest number of box-office successes both at home and abroad. Although his film *¡Átame!* (*Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down,* 1989) was condemned by Hollywood censors (and changed the U.S. rating system as a consequence) and his *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown,* 1988) was bypassed by the Oscars, he succeeded in winning two of those awards for his last two films (the only Spaniard thus far to do so). *Todo sobre mi madre* (*All About My Mother,* 1999) won an Oscar for best foreign language film, and *Hable con ella* (*Talk to Her,* 2002) for best screenplay. Yet unlike two of his most well-known former stars, Antonio Banderas and Penelope Cruz, whose Hollywood crossovers he helped make possible, or his young rival Alejandro Amenábar, whose *Abre los ojos* (*Open Your Eyes,* 1997) was remade in English as *Vanilla Sky* with Tom Cruise and whose English-language co-production, *The Others* (2000), with Nicole Kidman, was a huge global hit, so far Almodóvar has remained committed to making movies only in Spanish and only in Spain, where he has total artistic control. Headed by his brother and executive producer Agustín, El Deseo is operated by a fleet of talented young Spanish men and women who owe their personal loyalty and careers only to Pedro.

Leo (Marisa Paredes) and her mother (Chus Lampreave) in *La flor de mi secreto*.

This commitment to making films only on his home turf does not make his works insular, for they continue to feature a rich intertextuality with Hollywood movies—a dialogue that paradoxically underscores his own originality and boldness by contrast. And despite Spain's key position within the European Union (whose cultural, economic, and political capital as a global power is growing), Almodóvar's films emphasize connections not between Spain and other European nations but with Latin America, which, despite its huge population, still has a marginal position within the current configurations of global power. As noted by several speakers at the conference, these connections are fostered by Almodóvar's inclusion of Latin-American characters in his stories, by his casting of Argentine actors like Cecilia Roth (the star of *Laberinto de pasiones* and *Todo sobre mi madre*), and by his reliance on Latin-American music, particularly Mexican boleros (a dynamic that was brilliantly analyzed by Kathleen Vernon). In fact, as Vernon points out, Almodóvar's films have helped popularize Latin-American music and culture worldwide.[1] By extending the reach of his films throughout the Spanish language world, he deepens his penetration of the global market in a way that rivals Hollywood and Europe while still remaining loyal to his Spanish speaking origins and retaining the outsider's edge. This strategy may remind us of similar ones pursued earlier by the Havana Film Festival and by the international film school founded by Gabriel García Márquez in Cuba.

To add a further layer of complexity, starting with *La flor de mi secreto* (*The Flower of My Secret*) in 1995, Almodóvar's films have celebrated the Spanish pueblo (local village) as an alternative to identification with the European Union. He is increasingly committed to a cinema rooted in localism and autobiography whose originality is appreciated worldwide rather than to a bland Euro-pudding that produces bad imitations of Hollywood blockbusters. A similar strategy was also visible at the conference: while celebrating Almodóvar's global reach and success, the conference was still situated in his home turf of La Mancha, whose marginal position it helped push into the mainstream. It was strategically scheduled a few months before the opening of what he claims to be his most autobiographical film, *Mala educación,* which stars handsome young Mexican actor Gael García Bernal, whom *Newsweek Magazine* has dubbed "the hottest new import" and "the latin James Dean" and who "first captured Hollywood's attention with the Oscar-nominated *Amores perros*" and "the erotic indie smash, *Y Tu Mamá también*."[2] At the conference Almodóvar said he expects *Mala educación* (like *¡Átame!)* to have problems with the Hollywood rating system, this time over sexually explicit scenes with minors. Perhaps he hoped the conference would help recruit supporters for these upcoming negotiations. (At the time of this writing, the film has not yet opened in the U.S., even though it is already a big hit throughout Europe.)

As Christian Metz once observed in *The Imaginary Signifier,* film historians frequently find themselves becoming intellectual publicists for the texts they describe.[3] This is precisely what happened to all of us film scholars at the International Congress on Almodóvar, where we may not have appeared as extras in his latest film (as some of us were originally promised), but where we were all held in thrall by the live appearance of Almodóvar and his performers (including his current reigning divas, Marisa Paredes and Cecilia Roth) and where we were all cast as interactive players in a promotional drama that got extensive coverage in the Spanish press. As a consequence, we all got a "good education" on how auteurism currently works in the global film market.

The Brain-Dead Trilogy

At the beginning of Almodóvar's *La flor de mi secreto,* the protagonist happens to see the end of an educational video that trains medical personnel how to counsel loved ones of brain-dead patients. The video's goal is to get survivors to let go of the dead and donate their vital organs for life-giving transplants. Signaling a shift to a darker tone for his hyper-plotted melodramas both emotionally and visually, this painful opening inaugurates a new line of experimentation for Almodóvar, introducing new ways of mobilizing the body to represent social, political, and generic change. By calling these films a "brain-dead" trilogy, I do not mean to imply that these movies are mindless. Quite the contrary, I am arguing that the "brain-dead" trope demands an active mode of spectatorship that makes us highly attentive to the fascinating interplay between the expressive powers of words and bodies.

Whereas the trope of the brain-dead youth is merely a minor episode in *La flor de mi secreto* (a pivotal film that did not do particularly well in the global market), when transplanted to *Todo sobre mi madre* (*All About My Mother,* 1999) and *Hable con ella* (*Talk to Her,* 2002), those two stunning commercial and critical successes that gathered Oscars, Globes, Césars, and Goyas worldwide, it becomes the germinal image

that launches the plot of the former and fully flowers as the central premise of the latter. In all three melodramas this brain-dead trope refigures Spain as a motherland. It also fosters a fluid intertextual transsubjectivity that runs within and across the three films. This paper explores the implications of this brain-dead trope and the way it functions in all three works.

This auteurist tactic of introducing a theme as a minor motif in one film and then transplanting it to later works where it flowers is familiar in the works of many filmmakers from earlier decades, especially those who consistently draw on personal material—such as Woody Allen, John Cassavetes, Federico Fellini, and Ingmar Bergman. (In fact, this practice became so commonplace in Bergman's work during the 1960s that he could end *The Passion of Anna* (1969) by saying in voice-over of his male protagonist: "This time his name was Andreas Winkelman.") But in our period, more resistant to auteurism, the recurrence of an unusual trope like the brain-dead youth strategically demands a retroactive reading that attends to such auteurist echoes and encourages the audience to follow the filmmaker faithfully from one text to the next.

In his *New Yorker* review of Belgian director Lucas Belvaux's recent trilogy (*On the Run, An Amazing Couple,* and *After Life*), Anthony Lane argues that whereas earlier series like "Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly, Winter Light,* and *The Silence* became known as a trilogy . . . because those studies of fretful solitude began to pattern themselves as variations on a theme, Belvaux, however, planned his campaign from the start."[4] Contemporary cinematic trilogies become experiments not only in marketing strategies but also in narrative structure and seriality—ones that can occur within the film itself (as in inventive popular movies like *Groundhog Day* and *Run Lola Run*) or across a series of sequels (like *The Godfather, The Matrix, Kill Bill,* and *Lord of the Rings*). Or, as in the more complex cases of Buñuel's picaresque trilogy of *The Milky Way, The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie,* and *Phantom of Liberty,* and Kieslowski's "Three Colors" trilogy of *Red, Blue,* and *White,* and the trilogies of Belvaux and Almodóvar, the experimental narratives become an interwoven "laberinto de pasiones" that is spun both within each film and across the three texts—a structural pattern that can be perceived and fully appreciated only through rereading all three films with hindsight. Lane traces such narrative experimentation back to earlier literary works like Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* and the 1947 publication of "Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style,* in which a minor incident on a bus was recounted in ninety-nine different ways."[5] One could add Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* and many other literary works to his list. Yet I would also link this pattern to the current experiments with interactive open narratives that are increasingly popular in television, electronic games, and the internet and that are increasingly exerting a pressure on cinema—not only in the art cinema of European auteurs like Peter Greenaway, Mike Figgis, and Tom Tykwer, but also in popular Hollywood genre films like *Memento* and *21 Grams*.

By calling attention to this dynamic in Almodóvar's works, I am not claiming that he necessarily planned all three films as a trilogy in advance. The mere fact that he made another film between *La flor* and *Todo sobre mi madre* that does not contain the brain-dead trope suggests the contrary. Yet, even this work, *Carne trémula* (*Live Flesh,* 1997), his most explicitly political and doggedly heterosexual film to date, is illuminated by re-reading it in light of the trilogy. For, instead of a brain-dead youth, it features a straight paraplegic cop (played by Javier Bardem) whose lower body becomes dead flesh. It is as if the straight violent mindset from the fascist period and from Spain's patriarchal version of film noir (*cine negro español*) had to be exorcised before Almodóvar could do films like *Todo sobre mi madre* and *Hable con ella,* where heterosexuals and their relations are lovingly queered with a sexually mobile sensibility.[6]

Letting Go in *La flor de mi secreto*

In *La flor de mi secreto,* the brain-dead trope is confined within a video deceptively inset at the opening that trains us how to read the main plot. Behind the opening titles, we see two young doctors informing a grieving middle-aged mother that her 16-year-old son is "brain-dead," a concept she is unable to grasp and refuses to accept. The difficulty of understanding the ontological ambiguities of this condition is compounded by the meta-narrative status of the scene itself. At first it seems like the opening sequence of the main plot, but then, with a cut to a cameraman looking at the scene through his viewfinder, and a pan to a close-up of the teacher and then a long shot of the students to whom she is presenting this material, it is redefined as an inset documentary being used in a seminar for medical counselors and nurses. Later, after being introduced to the protagonist, Leo, a writer of romantic fictions marvelously played by Marisa Paredes, we return to this encounter and discover that this training video is actually a docudrama or fiction, for the doctors and the grieving mother are merely actors and the pri-

Leo and Paco (Imanol Arias) in *La flor de mi secreto*.

mary goal of the young men is not to comfort the woman for her loss but to persuade her to donate the vital organs of her loved one. Although this "brain-dead" sequence appears to be a false start, it functions as an analogue for the woman's melodrama that follows in the main plot.

The brain-dead trope applies primarily to Leo, for she is the one who is figuratively comatose. The first time we see her (between the two brain-dead training-tape sequences), she is asleep in a room dominated by framed portraits of her absentee husband. The trope also applies to the dead-end contracts (both literary and marital) that are drying up her creative and sexual juices. And to her unfinished novel *In Cold Storage* that documents her current death-in-life condition. And to those painful boots from her husband that cripple her feet and restrict her movement. And to her philandering husband, whose sex organ has been appropriated by her best friend, the treacherous teacher who uses brain-dead videos to persuade relatives to relinquish other vital organs of loved ones.

Leo must also let go of her masochistic attraction to the sexy flamenco dancer Antonio, the son of her maid, who is introduced in a dance sequence that also is inserted (like the introduction of Leo) between the two scenes of the brain-dead training tape. When Antonio steals Leo's unfinished novel to finance his own dance debut, he sacrifices her words for the expressive powers of his and his mother's dancing bodies. As if to foreshadow this conflict, the first sensations we experience behind the film's opening titles are printed words paired with the percussive sound of flamenco dancing. Like Almodóvar's recuperative reinscription of bullfighting in *Matador, La flor* performs a similar makeover on flamenco. For the brilliant dance numbers by the mother-son duo infuse flamenco with incestuous overtones, linking it to Almodóvar's revisionist stereotypes of transgressive sexuality. But Leo now abandons those stereotypes and redirects her love interest to a plump, nurturing writer named Angel, with whom she develops a healing trans-subjectivity, which, like the mother/child bond, fuses identification with desire. As an editor at *El país,* this feminized fellow-lover of words adopts her *nom de plume,* Amanda Gris, and its contractual obligations, freeing Leo to write whatever she pleases.

Such shifts in erotic desire function differently in *La flor* than in earlier Almodóvar films such as *Matador* (1986) and *La ley del deseo* (1987), which were made in the wake of *la movida,* when Spain was still celebrating the speed of its peaceful conversion from Francoism to democracy and when Almodóvar's characters were still undergoing instantaneous transformations in gender and sexuality, particularly while watching melodramas spiced with porn. In the opening of *La ley del deseo,* the handsome heterosexual played by Antonio Banderas is instantaneously converted into a homosexual after watching a hot scene of narcissistic sex in a melodrama directed by a gay filmmaker, and in *Matador* the fatal attraction between two serial killers is intensified and their silent suicide pact sealed while watching the notorious "lust in the dust" climax of King Vidor's melodramatic Western, *Duel in the Sun*. Both films celebrated cinema's power to perform a dramatic sex change on the nation's cultural stereotypes, which Almodóvar's sexually mobile canon potently accomplished in the 1980s and early 1990s by successfully penetrating and queering foreign markets. But by 1995, on the eve of the 1996 general election—when the right-wing Partido Popular defeated the PSOE—there was a need for a broad-based belief in the stability and strength of a democratic Spain that could survive this return to the Right. So it is not surprising that the pace of change in *La flor,* both for the female writer and the nation, is more gradual, and that the conversion takes place not within urban X-rated movie theaters but in the nurturing local village, which Almodóvar calls in the press kit the "cradle of Female crafts." *La flor* shows how earlier images of Spain and its traditional resources can be regendered female and recuperated as vital organs that can be transplanted for the twenty-first century.

Although this recuperative return to the maternal village had also occurred in earlier Almodóvar films, such as *Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto!* (*What Did I Do to Deserve This,* 1984), where the grandmother takes her delinquent grandson after his mother bashes in the brains of his father with a hambone, and in *¡Átame!* where the liberated porn queen takes her beloved captor to get her mother's blessing, it is only in *La flor,* the film that Almodóvar calls a "neo-realist portrait" of his mother, that we actually see the pueblo and the curative effects of the visit.[7]

The fashionably lean, love-starved Leo is awakened from her suicidal nightmare and death-in-life condition by the voice of her mother, whom she accompanies on a trip back to the Motherland—their home village in La Mancha, where Don Quixote and Almodóvar were born and where the Almodóvar conference took place. There her mother reminds her she was once called "gordita" and makes her pay attention to her own body. Not only does Leo's neurotic hard-edged persona prove to be dead weight, but her hard-bodied, cold-hearted husband, whose career choice—as a military strategist for Spain's NATO forces in Brussels and as a peacekeeper in Bosnia—now also proves more ominous in retrospect, particularly in light of José María Aznar's support of Bush and Blair in the recent Iraq war.

Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, this rural move in *La flor* is not provincial, for it implies an acceptance of global melodrama in place of multinational militarism, world-class flamenco instead of world cup soccer, commuting between metropolitan Madrid and the local pueblos of La Mancha rather than between Brussels and Bosnia. The film refigures the Spanish nation and its changing relations both with the micro-regional village and the macro-regional European Union. Released when Almodóvar and his generation had become disillusioned with the performance of the González government, it asked: How do you let go of corrupt authorities that you once trusted and loved?[8]

Transplants in *Todo sobre mi madre*

Whereas in *La flor,* a film made shortly before the Socialists were voted out of power, the emphasis was on pruning away dead-end structures, the emphasis switches to the regenerative power of transplants in *Todo sobre mi madre,* a film made four years later when Spain was more solidly entrenched within the power structures of the European Union, which were fostering the flow of émigrés across weakening national borders. Yet in contrast to more recent films such as *21 Grams* and *Dirty Pretty Things,* in Almodóvar's story the transplant is not crucial to the plot. Rather, it is used merely as a trope for a trans-subjective intertextuality that enables names, plots, words, viruses, and other vital organs to pass fluidly from one body or text or nation to another, a process introduced through the recurring figure of the brain-dead youth.

In *Todo sobre mi madre* the two brief brain-dead scenes from *La flor* grow into a 20-minute prologue, which is tripled to launch the main plot. This time the opening sequence in the National Transplant Organization focuses on detailed close-ups of an I.V. bag and its drip, colorful dials on the high-tech monitors, and EEG waves that signal that the patient's a goner, before

Penelope Cruz as Sister Rosa and Cecilia Roth as Manuela in *Todo sobre mi madre.*

panning to the protagonist, Manuela (Cecilia Roth), who is introduced as a healthcare worker in search of a recipient for the precious liver.

We then fluidly follow her into her domestic setting, where she transplants the brain-dead trope into the main plot. Instead of a rejected wife dreaming of her absentee husband like Leo, Manuela is a vivacious single mother cooking for her teenage son Esteban, who (like Almodóvar) has been writing fiction since he was eight years old. Their mother/son conversation takes a strange turn when they begin questioning each other over whether they would be willing to prostitute themselves for the other. The conversation looks backward not only to Manuela's own personal history with her husband, who (we later learn) is a transvestite prostitute, but also to Almodóvar's previous film, *Carne trémula,* where the single mother played by Penelope Cruz was a whore who (as her son Victor lovingly brags) turned thousands of tricks to support him. The conversation also helps prepare us for this film's later Barcelona sequences, which are swarming with hard-working hookers. Yet instead of being linked primarily to sexual mobility (as in his earlier films), this sequence's quick fluid movements across a variety of visual details, sounds, words, tones, and thematics immediately immerse us within a growing network of intertextuality, which energizes the narrative and extends the life, meaning, and mobility of all its discrete parts.

Nowhere is this intertextual dynamic more pointed than at the moment when mother and son settle down to watch *All About Eve* on television and see the scene in which Eve Harrington meets her idol, played by Bette Davis. This is the moment when the main title for *Todo sobre mi madre* appears on screen. In case anyone misses the blatant intertextual connection, Esteban claims the Spanish title of the Hollywood movie should have been *Todo sobre Eve*. These intertextual connections later become entangled with *A Streetcar Named Desire,* when we learn that Huma Rojo (the Spanish star whom Esteban worships and who is now playing Blanche DuBois) got her smoking habit and stage name from Bette Davis, and also when his mother, Manuela, is later accused of being an Eve Harrington

Marisa Paredes plays actress Huma Rojo in *Todo sobre mi madre*.

(by the actress whom she replaces as Stella). Though Esteban wishes his mother were still on stage, he settles for seeing her perform in the medical seminar, which carries them back to the hospital for the second brain-dead scene, this time admittedly pure fiction.

In this fictional training video Manuela plays the grieving woman who is told by two doctors that her husband is brain-dead. While her son takes notes, we now see a concise convergence of all the meta-narrative variations from *La flor*: the dramatized scene, its filming, and its pedagogical use in the seminar. We also see Manuela drawing from her own experience to play this role, a form of trans-subjectivity frequently used by performers. Thus far in the film we have already seen a rich interplay between fiction and real life, as well as many intertextual connections with earlier narratives by Almodóvar and other writers, but this intermingling reaches a dramatic climax in the sequence that follows.

It begins with a shot of Esteban writing in a café near a barred window through which we see a giant facial close-up of Marisa Paredes as actress Huma Rojo, posted in front of a theater, as if left over from her roles as pop star Becky Del Paramo in *Tacones lejanos* (*High Heels,* 1991) and writer Amanda Gris in *La flor*. Linking this image with the maternal, Manuela waits for her son in front of the poster, before they enter the theater to see a live performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire,* which is accompanied by Argentine background music that might come from Manuela's memories of her native homeland. Later, Manuela tells Esteban that 20 years ago she played Stella to his father's Stanley Kowalski in the same play, and promises to tell him their story as soon as they get home. He never gets to hear it, for just as *Streetcar* provides the back-story for Manuela's marriage and separation, the brain-dead video foretells Esteban's fate: he is run-down by a car and rendered brain-dead when running to get Huma Rojo's autograph in the rain. This time Manuela plays the brain-dead hospital scene for real and signs away Esteban's heart.

During this painful scene, and later when Manuela stalks the lucky organ recipient in Galicia, we hear two voiceovers by Esteban as if he were reading the last

entries from his journal: "Tomorrow I turn 17, but I look older . . . boys who live alone with their mother have a special face, like an intellectual or writer," and, "Last night, she showed me a photograph of when she was young. Half of it was missing and I didn't want to tell her that my life is missing that same half." As if trying to fill in the gaps in the photograph and the other half of Esteban's life, Manuela carries these voiceovers inside her as vital organs for a trans-subjective collaboration, a merging of voices that cannot save him (the way Leo was saved by her mother's voice) but that does extend his life story. Manuela continues, in maternal voiceover, with the episode she had promised to tell him: "17 years ago I made this same journey, but in the other direction from Barcelona to Madrid. I was running away then, too, but . . . I was carrying Esteban inside me. I was running away from his father, and now I am searching for him." As in her medical searches, she now seeks in her husband both the donor (who impregnated her) and the recipient (who will be regenerated by their son's journal).

In *Todo sobre mi madre* the interplay between bodies and words is developed intertextually through proper names and theatrical performances. Just as the name Esteban is passed from father to son and from one half-brother to another, the words of a playwright (whether a novice like Esteban or veterans like Tennessee Williams and Federico García Lorca) survive many performances and embodiments, as well as the death, of the author. And just as *Streetcar* drives the transformative events in Manuela's life (meeting her husband and losing their son), Esteban's journal is the narrative vehicle that fulfills his wish of meeting his father.

As the brain-dead prologue ends, Manuela disappears into a vagina-like tunnel, before she and her story are transplanted to Barcelona where they, and a new cultural stereotype for a globalized Spain, are reborn. There we learn that Manuela is a transplant from Argentina whose handsome Argentine husband Esteban became a transvestite in Paris.[9] Moving masterfully among a trinity of female roles (as actress, nurse and mother), Manuela carries the story of the Motherland back from the pueblos of Latin America to Spain's metropolitan centers of Madrid and Barcelona, where she embodies Almodóvar's new super-maternal stereotype for a globalized Spain.

When I interviewed Almodóvar in 1987 and asked him why in Spanish Oedipal narratives the patricidal impulse was so frequently displaced onto the mother, he replied: "The idea of motherhood is very important in Spain. It's as if the mother represents the law, the police. . . . When you kill the mother, you kill precisely everything you hate. It's like killing the power."[10] By the time he made *Tacones lejanos* in 1991, Almodóvar had replaced the repressive patriarchal mother with a glamorous pop star who, as her daughter's primary object of desire, was still overpowering. But here in *Todo sobre mi madre,* the non-repressive maternal figure becomes an alternative non-threatening "mother superior" who supersedes his earlier transsexual stereotypes of post-Franco Spain—a switch that may have been partly motivated by the global AIDS epidemic. Those earlier stereotypes are embodied in Manuela's husband Lola—a self-centered, drug-addicted, transvestite prostitute dying of AIDS, who is forgiven and replaced by the resourceful Manuela. Not only does this new "non-virginal Madonna" valiantly save the transvestite prostitute Agrado from a violent attack in Barcelona's notorious red light zone and Huma's straying young lesbian lover from street drugs, but she also adopts both Lola's newborn son and the infant's mother Sister Rosa, a young renegade nun left over from *Entre tinieblas* (*Dark Habits*, 1983). Like the single mother in the miraculous birth that opens *Carne trémula*, this martyred mother is played by Penelope Cruz—an endearing role that helped secure her crossover (or should we say "ascension") to Hollywood.

Despite the key roles that transvestites play in *Todo sobre mi madre,* the mobility generated by the story is more a matter of subjectivity than sexuality. The film demonstrates that not only are all genders and sexualities cultural constructs, but that the ability to love and identify across barriers of gender, sexuality, and class is a courageous leap of faith. This idea is most powerfully expressed by the transvestite Agrado, who, after cataloguing her many costly cosmetic surgeries, concludes the performance of her life story with a line about subjectivity with which everyone can identify: "It costs a lot to be authentic because you are more authentic the more you resemble what you dreamed you are." Without this imaginative leap, how can a woman be impregnated by a female impersonator (a scene we saw brilliantly enacted in *Tacones lejanos*)? In another era and genre, a similar kind of imaginative leap was made by Desdemona and Othello across divisions of race, age, and culture, an achievement that made their tragic end more painful. Here the imaginative leap is threatened neither by jealousy nor betrayal but by AIDS, the first time that global disease has been addressed in a film by Almodóvar. Although AIDS kills the transvestite father and

transgressive nun, the miraculous recovery of their child (the third Esteban in the series) proves the virus can be conquered.

The discovery of this miracle is made possible by the loving relationship that exists between the two nurturing mothers who were both impregnated by the same transvestite, and between the two sons who, as vital organs, are transplanted from one motherland to another. The fluid trans-subjectivity that flows between these women and the various sons, transvestites, lesbians, actresses, infantile fathers, and other dependents they mother, strengthens the alliance among female impersonators of all genders. Almodóvar addresses this reception community in his inclusive dedication: "To Bette Davis, Gena Rowlands, Romy Schneider [who committed suicide after the death of her son] . . . To all the actresses who have played actresses. To all women who act. To all men who act and become women. To all the people who want to be mothers. To My Mother." Almodóvar extends this list on his official website to include many other actresses who have played actresses on screen and ultimately places the female principle at the root of all narrative: "To me, three or four women speaking is the origin of life, but also of fiction and narrative."[11] It is this hyper-feminized trans-subjectivity that makes this movie the "mother" of all Almodóvar's maternal melodramas.

Far from suggesting that Almodóvar's trilogy is brain-dead, what I am arguing is that the image of the comatose youth becomes a new way of refiguring the crucial link between intertextuality and changing subjectivity— particularly when these processes are linked to loss, growth, and recovery. This recurring image runs across the three films and weaves them together, with *Todo sobre mi madre* at the emotional center. For this film not only replays the opening of *La flor de mi secreto,* but literally sets the stage for *Hable con ella*. As the official website points out: "*Todo sobre mi madre* ends with a theater curtain being opened to reveal a darkened stage, *Talk to Her* begins with the same curtain, also opening."

Resuscitation in *Hable con ella*

In *Hable con ella,* the masterpiece of the trilogy, the brain-dead case study takes over the entire film where it is doubled in two comatose young females: a ballet dancer named Alicia (Leonor Watling) and a matador named Lydia (Rosario Flores), who, when awake, were both masters of the body in motion. In the hospital their bodies are faithfully attended by verbal men who love them: Benigno (Javier Cámara), a lonely male nurse who used to be aroused by watching Alicia rehearse; and Marco (Darío Grandinetti), a sensitive Argentine journalist (like Angel in *La flor*), who was writing an article on Lydia for *El país*. Only the male nurse is nurturing, but he transmits both his love and maternal powers to the weepy empathic journalist. Only the dancer is brought back to life—through acts of love, both verbal and physical, that reawaken her body as a motherland. Though such acts would ordinarily be called "rape," the maternal Benigno performs them as part of his tragic devotion to his beloved, with whom he identifies and to whom he willingly donates his vital organs, even at the risk of his own life.

Despite this doubling of the brain-dead narrative and the film's emotional lushness, *Hable con ella* still feels almost pared down, particularly in comparison to the hyper-plotted, heavily populated ensemble piece, *Todo sobre mi madre*. This effect, I would argue, is partly the result of finally placing the brain-dead trope at center stage, instead of on the margins in an inset film or prologue. This move also enables several other narrative and emotional strands from earlier Almodóvar works finally to be pushed to their limits.

Hable con ella puts the emphasis not on letting go (as in *La flor*) nor on regenerative transplants (as in *Todo sobre mi madre*) but on "resuscitation," which requires an interplay between the expressive powers of words and body language. This combination is well suited to cinema and to the "dumb show" dimensions of melodrama—those non-verbal histrionics of the genre that Almodóvar has always mastered but that are now pushed all the way into dance. For the first time in the brain-dead trilogy, Almodóvar uses the comatose bodies to motivate long monologues and to alternate between these two modes of verbal and gestural expression. Although the split between words and body language is crucial in two dubbing sequences from earlier Almodóvar movies—the inset porn sequence at the opening of *La ley del deseo* that I have already mentioned, and *the Johnny Guitar* sequence from *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*, where Carmen Maura and her straying lover are dubbing the Joan Crawford and Sterling Hayward dialogue into Spanish,[12] this split does not dominate these earlier films nor the other two works in the brain-dead trilogy, as it does here in *Hable con ella*. With its miraculous recovery and bad timing, the romance of Benigno and Alicia combines the fairytale of *Sleeping Beauty* with the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet,* two paradigmatic love stories that have both

been repeatedly adapted to the pure gestural language of dance.

Behind the film's opening titles we see "Cafe Müller," a dance performed by the troupe of world-famous German choreographer Pina Bausch, who functions (like Huma Rojo) as this film's primary diva. Instead of beginning with an establishing shot of the theatrical setting, this dance sequence opens with a close-up of a female dancer, which immediately hooks us into the expressive power of body language. Taking over the introductory functions of the brain-dead video prologues from the earlier two films (as well as the flamenco dance numbers from *La flor* and live theater from *Todo sobre mi madre*), this nonverbal performance prefigures the double brain-dead drama of the main plot. As Almodóvar puts it, "*Hable con ella* begins and ends with two of her [Bausch's] works that melt miraculously with the plot. It's as if I had entrusted her with that choreography."[13]

What we actually see in the opening dance are two women in white slips moving blindly in a room full of chairs, with eyes shut as if sleepwalking, while a man in black (whom Benigno describes as, "the saddest man I've ever seen") runs ahead to move chairs out of their way. When the film cuts to the audience, we see Benigno and Marco, who both identify with this male attendant and who associate the female dancers with their respective beloveds. Although still strangers, Benigno is attracted to the empathic Marco (both emotionally and erotically) when he sees him moved to tears by the dance. The devoted Benigno has come to the theater so that he can describe this performance to the comatose Alicia, whom he has been nursing the past four years, and (like Esteban in the prologue to *Todo sobre mi mama*) so that he can get an autograph from the diva—a photograph of Pina Bausch inscribed to Alicia.

The opening performance enables us to perceive all human movement as dance, especially when set to music without words and presented in fetishizing close shots. The daily grooming and massaging of Alicia's inert body, the ritualistic dressing of Lydia in her suit of lights, the contrasting movements of matador and toro in the corrida, Marco's methodical killing of a snake, and the graceful gliding of an anonymous male

Brain-death takes center stage in *Hable con ella*.

Javier Cámara as Benigno.

body through a swimming pool—all of these actions are transformed into dance. At times the camera movements also appear to be choreographed, as in the sequence where Caetano Veloso is performing; as it sweeps across the faces of spectators and unifies them as a reception community, the camera also seems mesmerized by his song. This choreographing of movement suggests that any physical action can potentially be redeemed, depending on how it is performed and narrativized. To translate this complex body language into verbal description is inevitably reductive, even when it is as detailed as Benigno's account of the opening dance.

Benigno is the film's primary advocate for words. He claims talking is the first step to overcoming problems and the best way of showing women you love them. Having devoted 15 years to nursing his mother, this mama's boy admires and emulates women's ability to talk about their emotional lives, which is the core of maternal melodrama and, according to Almodóvar, the root of all fiction and narrative.[14] Yet Benigno rejects two patriarchal institutions that frequently play a crucial role in this genre because of their simplistic approach to language: psychoanalysis (with its so-called "talking cure" and diagnostic labels), and the law (with its binary choices of true/false and innocent/guilty). He resists other binaries (like gay or straight, male or female) and reductive definitions of key words like *brain-dead, psychopath,* and *rape*. He complicates the "talking cure" of traditional melodrama by combining it with illicit sexual moves performed offscreen—a combination whose verbal and hormonal infusions, miraculously bring Alicia back to life. As Alicia's dance teacher Katerina (Geraldine Chaplin) puts it, "Nothing is simple!" a point she illustrates with her dialectic description of a dance about World War I called "Trenches," which she is choreographing for Geneva, a city associated with peace: "From death emerges life, from the masculine emerges the feminine, and from the earth emerges . . . the ethereal." This description makes us realize why, after watching "Cafe Müller," it's so difficult to read Benigno's actions simply as rape. As Almodóvar puts it, "Telling the plot of *Hable* in a few words sounds crazy and is unfaithful to the film's spirit. . . . My stories are harder to tell in a few words now,"[15] and, I would argue, that is because of

his increasing reliance on physical gesture transformed into dance.

Yet consider an analogous narrative situation of sex with a comatose action heroine in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003), where extreme acts of violent revenge are performed with comic glee against the exploitive male nurse and the buddy to whom he pimps his patient's body, sentiments that are partly set up by an alternative intertextual choreography of martial arts action and anime. By the end of Volume 2, Tarantino's *Kill Bill* saga is also bent on reinventing the motherland, but (unlike the one envisioned in Almodóvar's brain-dead trilogy) it celebrates the sheer exuberance of cartoonish, comic book violence and the generative power of reflexive movie mayhem rather than any form of humanizing love or political critique.[16]

The radically different subjectivities of Tarantino and Almodóvar are self-defined (and probably partly shaped) by the different databases of intertexts that they draw on in their respective movies. Despite his own intertextual dialogue with Hollywood melodramas, Almodóvar purposely resists the kinds of master narratives that Tarantino recycles and uses his own dazzling inventiveness (like Katerina and Bausch) to re-choreograph these transgressive scenarios as fully embodied love stories. This is not the first time he has demonstrated how the fluid emotional landscape of melodrama can redeem any extreme act: rape in *¡Átame!* and murder in *Matador, La ley del deseo,* and *Tacones lejanos*. For Almodóvar has always used sexual mobility to challenge the calcified political correctness of every ideological persuasion.

As in *Todo sobre mi madre, Hable con ella* celebrates a loving trans-subjectivity that fuses identification with desire—one that can flow between mother and child, nurse and patient, friends and lovers, teacher and student, performer and spectator, regardless of gender. The film's gender mobility is demonstrated through the basic reversals of having male attendants grieving over their female brain-dead beloveds (instead of mothers mourning sons and husbands, as in the previous brain-dead films); by including a male nurse and female matador as key characters; by choosing two male protagonists for a maternal melodrama; and by using the offscreen closeted coupling between Benigno and Alicia as the subversive heterosexual act that deviates

Hable con ella: the masterpiece of the trilogy.

from his alleged homosexual identity that is presumed by so many others, including Alicia's father. The film suggests that the relationship between any two individuals (such as Benigno and Marco, or Alicia and Katerina) can potentially have erotic dimensions, even if they are not explicitly developed on screen. This idea is strengthened when Lydia's reconciliation with her former lover Niño (the famous torero) emerges out of an ellipsis.

It is precisely this kind of transgendered subjectivity, with its combination of identification and desire, that is fostered by cinema spectatorship and by other kinds of moving performances involving live theater, music, dance, and narrative.[17] Marco is first drawn to Lydia because of the desperation she expresses on a television talk show when trying to avoid discussing the painful breakup with her former lover Niño. Both Lydia and Benigno are drawn to Marco because of the tears he sheds while watching performances by Veloso and Bausch. Benigno shares Marco's travel adventures by reading his travel books and identifying with the Cuban woman he describes, and he merges with Alicia by adopting her passions for dance and silent cinema.

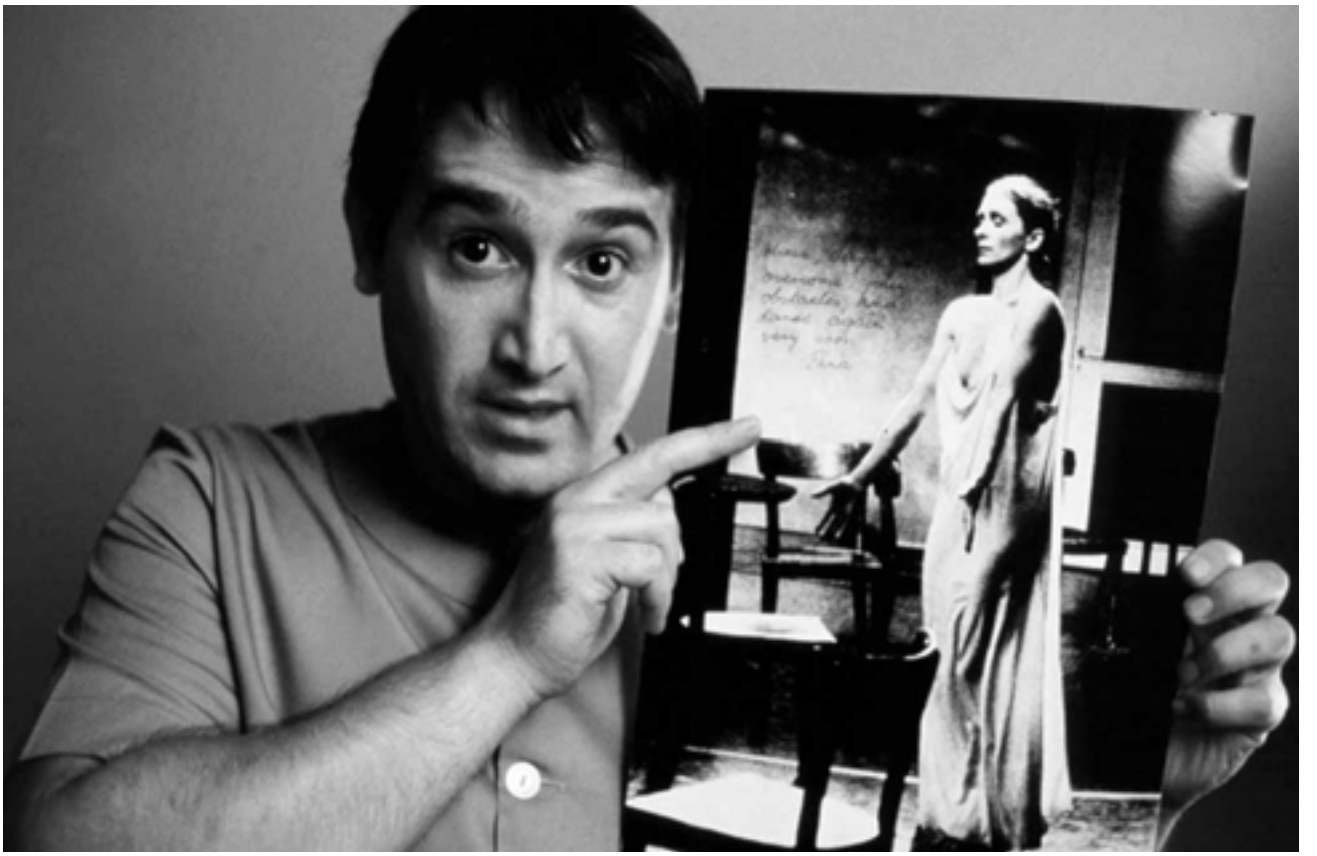
Benigno presumably has sex with the comatose Alicia after seeing a silent film, another art form redefined as dance, that proves as transformative as porn. In this faux silent classic, "The Shrinking Lover," after drinking an untested potion brewed by his scientific beloved, the devoted hero shrinks to a size smaller than a fetus or tampon, then climbs into his lover's vagina (which is as welcoming as the tunnel to Barcelona in *Todo sobre mi madre*). Parodying the American cult film *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) while echoing the Oedipal dream told at the opening of Ingmar Bergman's *Sawdust and Tinsel* (1953), this plot is reenacted by Benigno with a little help from his friend Marco and from Alicia's hair clip. Though its snapping teeth might evoke the castrating image of *vagina dentata* (at least to a Freudian shrink like Alicia's father), Benigno reads this fetishized hair clip through the romantic climax of "The Shrinking Lover," where the sleeping beauty's gigantic rubbery vagina is visibly toothless and benign. After Benigno steals the barrette from Alicia's bedroom and then bequeaths it to Marco, this slippery fetish is slipped back into Benigno's pocket before his burial so that (like the shrinking lover) he can be reunited with her for eternity as "inmate" or "intern" (the preferred term for prisoners in the Segovia prison).

The love story of Benigno and Alicia alternates with the tale of Marco and Lydia, its primary analogue, as theme and variation, the same way that *Hable con ella* is a variation on the earlier two films in the brain-dead trilogy. Thus we see Marisa Paredes and Cecilia Roth (who played the female protagonists of those two earlier films) in the audience listening to Veloso, whose lyrics apply to all three movies. And we don't have to see the accident that renders Alicia brain-dead, because we already saw Esteban's similar accident in *Todo sobre mi madre,* which also occurred in the rain. The two parallel stories told by Benigno and Marco are interwoven seamlessly together like a classical *pas de deux,* moving fluidly both backwards and forwards in time while braiding comic and tragic strands together in a rich Shakespearean weave.

Despite Benigno's strong desire for narrative closure, which helps drive him to suicide, the film creates the sense that the whole story can never be fully told. For it still contains ellipses that haven't been explored and it ends with the beginning of a new story, formalized in the title "Marco and Alicia." This new story is also launched by dance: two more Bausch numbers performed in the theater where Marco and Alicia happen to meet. Looking backwards, the first dance, which again moves Marco to tears, shows several men passing the body of a woman between them, evoking "Cafe Müller" and the tragic scene in which Lydia's broken body was carried out of the corrida. Looking forward, the second number expresses hope with the openness of its ending: a series of couples who diversify the traditional moves of romance by changing partners.

In *Hable con ella,* the nurturing interplay between physical gestures and words proves to have a transformative effect not only on the body of the dancer who is impregnated and revived, and on the writer who becomes bonded to the male nurse through identification and desire, but also on those of us in the audience whom this film manages to convince that every physical act (no matter how transgressive) can potentially be re-narrativized as an act of love.

These are the revitalizing transplants that can potentially turn vengeful patriarchal nations into nurturing motherlands—a view that is very appealing not only in Spain, a nation historically burdened with a colonial legacy of brutal violence and still plagued with national scandals over widespread domestic abuse, but also in our present global political context of deep irreconcilable hatreds. Such sentiments are consistent with Almodóvar's brief courageous speech against the Iraq war at the 2002 Oscar ceremonies, where he won for Best Original Screenplay. His brain-dead scenarios imply that Spain's imaginary of mobile transgres-



Benigno brings Alicia the inscribed photo of choreographer Pina Bausch.

sive sexuality and nurturing maternal voices, which he helped make central to its cinema, has a curative power to offer the rest of the world, particularly in an age of mindless, brain-dead violence. As the film's press book puts it: *"Talk to Her* is a story about . . . silence as eloquence of the body, about how a film told in words can . . . install itself in the lives of the person telling it and the person listening . . . about the joy of narration and about words as a weapon against solitude, disease, death and madness."

Afterword

This connection between Almodóvar's brain-dead trilogy and his opposition to Aznar's support of Bush's war on Iraq may have seemed somewhat strained when I presented this paper in Cuenca. Yet it has become more evident in the wake of subsequent historic events: the March 2004 terrorist train bombings in Madrid, and Spain's general election the following Sunday, when Aznar's government was ousted because of its dishonest attempts to blame the bombings on ETA and to disavow any connection with its own unpopular militaristic policies on Iraq. The vote demonstrated that the anti-war sentiments espoused by Almodóvar in *La flor de mi secreto* and at the Oscars were widespread throughout Spain.

Almodóvar was even more outspoken on the following Tuesday (March 16th) at the press conference for his new film, *Mala educación*. After referring to press reports that Aznar's Partido Popular (PP) had planned to postpone the general election so that they could stay in power, Almodóvar claimed, "We were on the verge of a PP coup d'etat!" In retaliation, the defeated Partido Popular immediately filed a lawsuit against Almodóvar for slander. According to BBC news reports, "four thousand PP supporters rallied outside the party's headquarters on Wednesday and denounced Almodóvar's film, which deals with sexual harassment in a religious school, as an attack on the Catholic Church."[18] Although this scandal surrounding the film was very different from the one Almodóvar had predicted at the Cuenca conference, it generated an even greater notoriety that boosted his movie's box-

office appeal. *Mala educación* was immediately chosen to open the 2004 Cannes Film Festival, edging out Hollywood's apolitical "favorite," *Kill Bill: Vol. 2* (despite the fact that Tarantino was heading this year's jury).[19] At the March 16th press conference, Almodóvar also proclaimed:

> We have just lived through moments of great pain, and extreme tension. . . . Consequently, all of the staff at El Deseo decided to postpone the [premiere] party, but the week ended with liberating news. We are again returning to being a democratic nation, something that we have ceased being over the past few years. I am very happy to again be living in a nation of freedom and solidarity. . . . Furthermore, we have saved the press screening because finally it's about our work and us, and I hope that the film gives us reasons for celebration at the party.

Although some Spanish critics and political pundits accused Almodóvar of having exploited the bombings and election merely to promote his latest deviant movie, the scandal made many Spanish moviegoers more eager to see it, as if they were hoping it would express a libertarian anti-Aznar, anti-patriarchal perspective that they shared. The film also did extremely well in Europe, particularly in Paris, partly, I suspect, for similar political reasons.

As I have been arguing for over a decade, despite his earlier disavowal of Francoism in the 1980s, Almodóvar's continued celebration of sexual mobility and subversive pleasures has consistently confronted the legacy of political repression in Spain. And his growing auteurist success and celebrity in the global sphere, which he learned how to leverage, help remind us that pivotal Spanish events (such as the Civil War and the peaceful transition from Francoism to democracy) have frequently been read as dress rehearsals for political developments in other parts of the world. This reminder might give some of us hope, not only in Spain but worldwide, that the "liberating news" of Aznar's defeat will prefigure the defeat of George W. Bush, and that the United States will also soon return "to being a democratic nation."

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Notes

1. Kathleen Vernon, "Las canciones de Almodóvar." Paper presented at the Congreso Internacional Pedro Almodóvar, November 27, 2004.
2. Sean Smith, "The Hottest New Import," *Newsweek* (January 5, 2004): 104.
3. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 14.
4. Anthony Lane, "Three's a Crowd," *New Yorker* (February 2, 2004): 94-95.
5. Ibid., 94.
6. Instead of a brain-dead video, *Carne trémula's* prologue contains an extraordinary birth on a public bus, a scene that is doubled (à la Queneau) in black-and-white newsreel coverage of the event. The film's performative style prefigures the ballet sequences in *Hable con ella* with two wonderful non-verbal sequences accompanied by moving boleros, which transform ordinary human actions (a basketball game and hot straight sex) into dance. This extraordinary sex results in the birth of a child, whose 26-year old father Victor was born at the film's opening in January 1970, when Franco's government imposed a State of Emergency in Spain that suspended all forms of freedom. Between these two births that frame the film, Spain undergoes a radical transformation. As Almodóvar puts it, "Twenty-six years earlier the streets were deserted, now . . . the sidewalks are crowded with happy, drunk, consuming people. People in Spain have lost their fear long ago, and for this reason only, Victor's son is born in a much better country than his father was" (www.clubcultura.com/clubcinemastes/almodovar). Curiously, in depicting these cultural changes, *Carne trémula* remains exclusively heterosexual; even Victor embodies a straight version of *la movida* that evokes those sexually mobile characters usually played by Banderas in earlier Almodóvar movies.
7. Marvin D'Lugo, "Genealogía de las 'sórdidas comedias neosurrealistas' almodovarianas." Paper presented at the Congreso Internacional Pedro Almodóvar, November 26, 2004.
8. Marsha Kinder, "Refiguring Socialist Spain: An Introduction," *Refiguring Spain: Cinema/Media/Representation,* ed. Marsha Kinder (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 1-32.
9. Marvin D'Lugo, "The Geopolitical Aesthetic in Recent Spanish Cinema," *Postscript* vol. 21 no. 2 (Winter-Spring 2002): 79-90.
10. Marsha Kinder, "Pleasure and the New Spanish Mentality: A Conversation with Pedro Almodóvar," *Film Quarterly* (Fall 1987): 43.
11. www.clubcultura.com/clubcinemastes/almodovar.
12. Peter Evans, "Citas filmicas en las películas de Almodóvar." Paper presented at the Congreso Internacional Pedro Almodóvar, November 27, 2004.
13. www.clubcultura.com/clubcinemastes/almodovar.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. As in the ironic ending of *Natural Born Killers* (which Tarantino wrote but didn't direct), *Kill Bill's* murderous

antagonists are finally domesticated through the purifying blood ties of the twisted American family—in this case, Beatrix Kiddo's transformation into BB's beautiful Mommy dearest. Yet, this comic ending is merely a brief lapse into banality, for the final noir image of Beatrix driving alone down a two-lane blacktop carries us back to the edgy opening and reassures us that her most memorable blood ties are still her driving lust for vengeance. She sticks in our memory as the Black Mamba killer, that indomitable blonde roadrunner whom many of us movie-lovers find so thrilling.

17. The foundational nature of these spectator dynamics is dramatized in *Mala educación* when we see the first homosexual encounter between two young schoolboys in a movie theater as they watch a sexy heterosexual scene featuring the gorgeous Sara Montiel, who is clearly an object of identification and desire for both boys and whom one of them will later impersonate on stage as an adult. This sequence also potentially complicates our prior understanding of the sexual mobility dramatized in the opening porn scene of *La ley del deseo,* where the Banderas character switches his sexual orientation. Similarly, *Mala educación*'s complex love triangle involving two brothers enables us to reread the main plot of *La ley del deseo* and its sexual mobility in new and more provocative ways.
18. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment.
19. Brian Brooks, "On the Scene," *Indie Wire* (www.indiewire-.com).

Abstract *Flower of My Secret* begins with a training-video for counseling relatives of brain-dead patients. When transplanted to *All About My Mother* and *Talk to Her,* the brain-dead trope launches the plot of the former and flowers as central premise of the latter. It refigures Spain as a motherland through a fascinating interplay between words and bodies.

Almodóvar (center) with the author (third from left) and the other academic panelists at the 2003 international congress on the filmmaker.

Jacob Smith

Filling the Embarrassment of Silence:

In her essay "Crackers and Whackers: The White Trashing of Porn," Constance Penley suggests that if the "breakthrough" of Linda Williams' study of film pornography, *Hard Core*, was "to get us to think of pornography as film," then "the next logical step" would be "to consider pornographic film as popular culture." As a way of determining "what traits pornographic film shares with the production and consumption of a whole range of popular forms," Penley points to a tradition of bawdy songs and dirty jokes that she sees as having a connection to the use of humor in pre-World War II American stag films.[1] This is a productive connection to make, but one that omits a body of mass media erotica that can be particularly illuminating for the study of film pornography: recorded erotic performances on phonographic records.

This paper is an analysis of a little-known genre of phonographic recordings called "blue discs" or "party records" made between the 1930s and 1950s. Sold under the counter, and often made anonymously or by tiny independent labels, these records are not commercially available, although collectors of vintage 78-rpm records have frequently obtained them.[2] Blue discs can help to bridge the historical and technological gap between an oral tradition of erotic performance and film, as well as adding context to the discussion of dynamics and tensions found in film pornography. In addition, blue discs offer a valuable case study in the use of the woman's voice in the sound media, a topic that has stimulated an interesting and diverse body of research and theory about gender, performance, and sound media. Following Penley's suggestion to address a "range of popular forms," I'll begin by contextualizing these recordings in terms of performances in several adjacent media: the burlesque stage, radio, film, and oral riddling traditions.

Blue discs can help to bridge the historical and technological gap between an oral tradition of erotic performance and film, as well as adding context to the discussion of dynamics and tensions found in film pornography.

Blue discs were first made at the historical moment when the tradition of the American burlesque stage was coming to an end. In his historical study of that tradition, Robert Allen describes how nineteenth-century burlesque had featured the "transgressive power of the union of charismatic female sexuality and inversive subordination," embodied respectively by a visual and a verbal performance.[3] Over the course of the century, women on the burlesque stage became increasingly mute visual spectacles, as their performance moved from intricate punning on high art conventions to graphic sexual displays like the striptease, which "did not become a standard feature of burlesque until the mid-1920s."[4]

Allen's historical overview presents a trajectory where "the appeals of burlesque became increasingly bifurcated: verbal humor provided usually by male comedians and sexual display provided by female performers."[5] The female burlesque performer morphed into either the mute, unthreatening "doll-like, decorative sexuality" of the Ziegfeld girl, or the "unruly" female performance of Mae West, Sophie Tucker, or Bessie Smith, figures whose transgressive power "was channeled and defused through their construction as grotesque figures."[6] In the later embodiment of burlesque, the verbal work of salacious, double-entendre humor was performed almost entirely by men. In fact, it became so customary for women to be "the mute objects of sexual humor in burlesque sketches" that a special term was invented to designate one who actually spoke: the "talking woman."[7] Seen in this context, the

Film Quarterly, Vol. 58, Issue 2, pages 26-35. ISSN 0015-1386, electronic ISSN 1533-8630. © 2005 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, at www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm.

Erotic Performance on "Blue Discs"

blue disc (which features both male and female speaking performers, and solely verbal performance) both captures and goes against the grain of the fading burlesque stage tradition.

The 1930s were the twilight of the American burlesque stage and the dawn of the recorded blue disc, but the decade also saw a more general realignment in the media landscape. While other media industries struggled through the 1930s, radio "proved to be the most resilient part of the entertainment industry during the Great Depression."[8] Blue discs reflect the influence of radio both in terms of production and form. Some of these recordings directly parody radio conventions. Take for example, a recording called "The Pioneer," which begins like this: "Good evening ladies and gentlemen of our radio audience. This is station G-I-N, the breath of the nation, operating on a clear-channel frequency of 300 crap-o-cycles by order of the Federal Bullshit Commission. Now my dear friends, we've had so many letters complaining about the goddamn lies that you've been hearing on this station that to satisfy all you cocky bastards we are going to present something very, very serious."

This parodying of radio conventions illustrates that the makers of these records were, to use Ed Cray's term, "educated authors." In his book *The Erotic Muse*, Cray notes that bawdy songs and limericks were "almost exclusively the work of educated authors," and that this "literate authorship" is reflected most clearly in "the great number of parodies" these forms present.[9] Similarly, many of the creators of blue discs seem to have been "literate" in the field of radio. In a personal interview, blue-disc collector and discographer David Diehl described how these discs seem to have been frequently created by radio professionals: "Broadcast folks really loved to make dubs of party records for their advertising clients."[10] Diehl states that one recording called "The Crepitation Contest," an elaborate radio parody, "was performed by CBC people at RCA Canadian studios."[11] Like the stag films described by Linda Williams, which were thought to have been created by professional filmmakers during their off hours, this record seems to have been made by media-savvy professionals.

However, unlike radio, the phonograph industry was particularly hard hit by the Depression, and record sales plummeted. Fewer people could afford records for home use, so public listening became more widespread. This public listening was centered on the jukebox: "[R]ecorded sound weathered the Depression of the 1930s with the help of coin-slot players in public places."[12] In fact, "by 1936 over half of all record production in the United States was destined for [jukeboxes]."[13] Jukeboxes at the time were often found in bars and taverns: "the repeal of prohibition in 1933 brought about a dramatic change in social life as Americans flooded back to bars and clubs. No self-respecting drinking establishment was without [a jukebox]."[14]

The social context of listening in a neighborhood tavern was particularly conducive to a certain kind of male, social talk. In Anna McCarthy's study of early television's tavern audience, she describes how the neighborhood tavern of post-Prohibition America was characterized by its frequent exclusion of women, its atmosphere of male "egalitarianism," and notably, its function as a kind of "working-class public sphere": "[the tavern's] community role rested upon an ability to offer both amusement *and* discourse." People came to "talk, exchange ideas," and discuss problems, as well as drink and listen to the jukebox.[15]

The fact that blue discs are also referred to as party records may point to their frequent use in social gatherings.

Blue discs seem to have been made largely for this tavern jukebox audience. David Diehl described how blue discs often have "an old sentimental singalong tune on one side and a risqué number on the other," so as to more easily hide the obscene material on jukeboxes. Diehl also notes that the advertising for one blue-disc manufacturer, Larry Vincent's risqué Pearl Records, carried the slogan "Rockin' the Boxes." The reception of these records, then, involved a place (the tavern) associated with talk, joking, and discussion, and a predominantly, if not entirely, male audience.

These dynamics of reception are one of many similarities between blue discs and stag films. Williams describes the stag audience in terms that evoke similarities to the tavern audience: they were a "group of horny, vocal, curious, misogynist boys and men," in a "stag party in the home, fraternal hall, or brothel."[16] The fact that blue discs are also referred to as party records may point to their frequent use in social gatherings.[17] Besides sharing similar contexts of reception, both blue discs and stag films were made between the 1930s and 50s, both were sold under the counter, and both were made by fly-by-night, media-savvy production outfits. However, the stag and the blue disc are polar opposites in one regard: the stag was a purely visual experience, and the blue disc a purely auditory one. Stags remained silent long after Hollywood had switched to sound, and Williams postulates a viewing context for stags that was marked by an "embarrassment of silence," filled with "verbal jokes and embarrassed laughter."[18] An analysis of blue discs might add an audio track to those contexts of reception, suggesting the kinds of verbal jokes that might have filled the embarrassment of silence.

In addition to contributing to the understanding of the stag film, blue discs offer a productive and overlooked case study in the analysis of the woman's voice in sound media. As scholars like Kaja Silverman, Amy Lawrence, and Michele Hilmes have shown, the presentation of women's voices in sound media has often been considered a source of difficulty: "A theme that resurfaces time and again in phonography, radio, and sound film is the persistent 'problem' of recording, transmitting, or reproducing women's voices."[19] Lawrence goes on to state that the "problem" of the woman's voice is "always a tangle of technological and economic exigencies, each suffused with ideological assumptions about woman's 'place.'"[20] As I will show, the blue disc features the female voice in ways that overlap with radio and the sound film, but which are also distinct to their cultural and technological context.

I begin my examination of the verbal techniques found on blue discs by borrowing a theoretical framework from Linda Williams, who describes two poles of visual pleasure in stag films: one inherited from the striptease and featuring the bodies of women on display to a collective male group, and the other consisting of a more fully developed narrative and featuring identification with a male protagonist.[21] I argue that similar dynamics exist on blue discs, which contain both techniques of speech play and forms of erotic performance more specific to recording. The first technique I will analyze utilizes the form of speech play called the "pretended-obscene riddle," and the second is a form of performance that seeks to embody a "breakthrough out of performance" via the verbal traces of authentic arousal.

The pretended-obscene riddle, the most frequent technique found on these blue discs, has two specific parts—the question and the answer—with "the obscene situation" presented in only one of the two separate parts: "In almost all cases the obscenity is non-existent, no obscenity is voiced at all, but rather so implied as to force the listener to imagine an obscene situation that is never evidenced in the answer."[22] For example, "What is it that's hard, long and leaks?" where the answer is, "a fountain pen."

An important factor in this form is the way that it mobilizes the participation of the listener by forcing him or her to imagine the obscene situation. In this way, the listener actually becomes the author of the obscene dimension of the joke. Also, the obscenity of the riddle is a breech of social decorum, but one that is "group-approved."[23] That is, the riddle cannot be performed in just any social context, but tends to be enacted in "small group interactions" amongst a "relatively homogeneous group."[24]

The listener actually becomes the author of the obscene dimension of the joke.

This homogenous group was sometimes exclusively male, much like the tavern context of the blue disc and typical exhibition sites of the stag film. Jan Brunvand provides the example of a male society for whom this type of performance is an important part of group identity: the "Turtle Club." This is "an American riddling mock organization that is popular in the military services," where "the whole routine of

asking the riddles, issuing the [membership] cards, and quizzing others for their membership is often performed in bars."[25] The homogenous male group, and its location in the bar, recalls both the tavern context of the blue disc and typical exhibition sites of the stag film: brothels and American "smokers" hosted by exclusive male clubs.[26]

Blue discs utilize forms of speech play much like these pretended-obscene riddles, often in a situation involving a dialogue between a man and a woman that results in relative dynamics of mis-hearing and misframing. That is, the performers are in what Erving Goffman calls different "information states": "the knowledge an individual has of why events have happened as they have, what the current forces are, what the properties and intents of the relevant persons are, and what the outcome is likely to be."[27] One way to create a typology of these performances is to gauge the information states of the participants: to note which of the characters are aware of the sexual or obscene connotations of the joke, which character is "in" the erotic frame, and which is "out." What follows is a typology of differing information states I have encountered.

Woman Is Out

The most frequent type of blue disc presents a woman who is seemingly unaware of the erotic nature of the dialogue in which she is involved. For example, take "Bull Fight, Part 1" (No Label Name 316-A). On this record, a man and a woman discuss a bullfight. As the woman describes the proceedings, the man reframes her words in sexual terms. For example, the woman tells the man that when he is "fighting the bull," he will have to "pull out" his "bandolero," to which he replies, "You mean right in front of all those people?" "Certainly," she says, "That's what they came to see." "Well," he replies, "they'll have to look goddamn close!" Her discourse is straight, while his re-keys her words to an erotic frame.

One thing that is notable about this joke is the way it frankly addresses male anxiety, and, in fact, penis size is a recurring topic on blue discs. However, often this male anxiety is expressed negatively, in terms of female anatomy. When the woman in "Bull Fight, Part 1" describes how the king, queen, and her ladies in waiting "all walk over and sit in the queen's box," the man replies, "I've heard of putting your foot in it, but I'll be damned if I ever heard of anyone sitting in it." "Well that's nothing," she continues, "she has four or five guards standing in it." "Four or five guards standing in it?" he asks, dumbfounded, "now you're stretching things too damn far." Jokes directed towards the female genitals are found on many blue discs. Legman notes that this is a common trait of obscene jokes more generally, and offers an explanation for their resonance with the male audience. For Legman, jokes representing "the female genitals" as "too big" represent a "direct expression of the anxiety" that the penis is too small: "Rather than admit that the penis is 'too small,' as is fearfully believed, it is far simpler to state that the vagina is 'too big.'"[28] On recordings like "Bull Fight," a male audience colludes with a male performer in projecting male anxieties onto the female body.

Another example in which the woman is out of the erotic frame can be heard on "Just Another Mount" (Hi-Lite Records 102A). As on several records, the situation is framed by the introductory reading of a letter. A man's voice reads:

> How do you find things in Los Angeles? While you're there, you might look up the girl I told you about, the one I met at Santa Anita racetrack. Boy, she's a honey. And she's got the cutest sister you ever saw. They're both crazy about the races, so tell them you're a jockey and you're all set.

This letter ensures that the (male) audience and the male protagonist will be in on the erotic frame of the situation. The following dialogue between the man and the "girl from Santa Anita racetrack" reveals her obliviousness to its erotic dimensions. "I'm looking for a good man to ride my sister," she says. "How's her form?" the man asks. "Great!" she replies, "and she's the trimmest thing you ever saw. Long, tapering legs, and hips like a model." "Well," he says, "sounds alright to me." "Now, how will you mount her?" the woman asks. "Well," he replies, "I'll just throw one leg over first and kind of sneak the other one over." "That's the stuff," she answers. Unlike the "Bull Fight," where the woman is never "let in" on the joke, this record ends with the woman catching on to the man's real intentions and scolding him.[29]

Several conclusions can be drawn about the "Woman Is Out" dynamic, in my experience the most common type of blue disc. Framing the dialogue this way encourages the (presumably) male audience to identify and collude with the male protagonist. The woman partakes in the obscene dialogue and situation, but without taking the responsibility for the erotic dimension of the proceedings. She is allowed to stay "pure," uninvolved in the sexual insinuations. Despite

the fact that she is speaking, the woman also becomes a kind of passive verbal spectacle: she is saying things without understanding them, functioning as a "straight man." This dynamic complicates Freud's suggestion that the "smutty joke" is "directed toward a certain person who excites one sexually, and who becomes cognizant of the speaker's excitement by listening to the smutty joke, and thereby in turn becomes sexually excited." For Freud, the smutty joke was "like the denudation of a person of the opposite sex toward whom the joke is directed," in that, "through the utterance of obscene words the person attacked is forced to picture the parts of the body in question, or the sexual act, and is shown that the aggressor pictures the same thing."[30] Following Freud, one might expect a female character on blue discs to be more clearly aroused, angered, or embarrassed, and so provide a pleasure akin to "denudation." In contrast to this, the woman in this prevalent type of blue disc is typically not aroused or ashamed, but instead is kept oblivious and out of the loop.

Returning to Robert Allen's descriptions of the later burlesque tradition, recall that the women on stage had become mute visual spectacles and the objects of the verbal joking of male burlesque comics. A similar dynamic exists on these types of blue discs. There are no "unruly women" in the tradition of Mae West, and the female performer's involvement is titillating without being threatening. The prevalence of this dynamic reflects a context of homosocial listening by a Depression-era male community whose masculinity was particularly threatened.

Man Is Out

Constance Penley has noted that, in terms of the humor found in American stag films like *On the Beach (a.k.a. Getting His Goat)*, "the joke is usually on the man."[31] I have found only one instance of a blue disc on which the man is out of the erotic frame. On "Candid Camera" (Party Record 511A), the recording begins with the reading of a letter: "Hmm. Looks like a government letter. Dear madam, as you perhaps know, the government under-code number 6842 for the propagation of the race has made it mandatory for all married couples to produce children before the termination of their fifth married year. Our Mr. Socket will call on you, and explain our method, and render such assistance as you may need in complying with the code." This institutional key depersonalizes the situation that follows, and also takes the woman off the hook to a certain degree—though she might have erotic thoughts, they are brought about by her obediently following (male) government orders.

The woman is allowed to be in the erotic key without becoming a spectacle.

Still, despite the way the letter reduces the agency of the female performer, she is actually operating in the erotic frame while the man is out of it. "Good morning, Mrs. Haywire," says a man at the door, "I see by the paper that you've just celebrated your fifth wedding anniversary. Any children?" "I'm afraid you've come to the right house," she answers, "and I'm ready to listen and act according to your instructions." "Very well," he says, "we might as well get busy. You see, we have the thing reduced to a veritable science. I should recommend at least two in the bathtub, one or two on the couch, and a couple on the floor." "Good heavens!" she answers. "Well," he replies, "you want your child natural don't you?" Unlike the records described above, here it is the man who is unaware of the erotic nature of the dialogue, and so is "out" of the erotic frame. By contrast, the woman is presented in the same information state as the listener, which could encourage identification with her and not the man, setting the stage for a more transgressive female performance.

One aspect of Mrs. Haywire's performance that is notable by its absence is prosody: paralinguistic ornaments and nuances of inflection. Indeed, like many of the female performers on these discs, she recites these lines in a rather rote and monotone way, unlike the most famous erotically charged female performer of the time: Mae West. Matthew Murray describes the outcry over West's 1937 appearance on the *Chase and Sanborn Hour*. During the final rehearsal for the show, West recited her lines "straight," but during the broadcast she added her own prosodic "insinuations," which, according to some, "added plenty."[32] After the West appearance on the *Chase and Sanborn Hour*, NBC issued numerous public statements which, like this one, reveal the difficulty of policing prosody: "It is a well known fact that it is well-nigh impossible to detect in a written script, words or phrases, which written innocently enough, may be subject by innuendo and intonation to interpretation other than meanings which the words were intended to convey."[33]

West's prosodic inflections of innocuous lines provoked outcry and controversy, demonstrating the importance of prosody to key the erotic frame. West came

from a burlesque stage tradition where banal words could, via prosodic and gestural cues, be made suggestive. Elaborate prosody and extra-verbal display like West's rolled eyes and suggestive saunter are important ways in which the erotic can be keyed, neither of which are present on these discs. While the phonographic performance obviously eliminates gestures, it lends itself to the capturing and reproduction of prosodic nuance. It is notable then, that this dimension of performance is minimized on blue discs. This kind of female prosodic display allows the performer a level of transgressive power, and its absence might suggest that it may have been too threatening to the male audience. On the blue disc "Candid Camera," the "official key" of the letter helps to justify the reduction of prosodic adventurousness. Thus, Mrs. Haywire is never allowed to take any pleasure from the fact that she is "in" on the erotic dimension of their interaction. Female desire is presented, but blunted by the frame of letter: she's just following orders.

Man And Woman Are Both In

On the record "He Put the Dix in Dixie" (Party Platters 303-B), the male and female interactants exchange one-liners and obscene riddles, and are both clearly in on the erotic frame. A very rudimentary narrative quickly dissolves into back and forth double-entendre-laden dialog. Given the relative equality of their position vis-à-vis the erotic frame, it is interesting that this performance leads to conflict between the two, and the foregrounding of gender issues. "Didn't your father and mother get along?" she asks. "No," he answers, "they fought all the time." "By the way," she proceeds, "who was your father?" "That's what they fought about," he says. "So that makes you a woman-hater, huh?" she asks. "Well," he says, "you can't get along with 'em." "You can't get along without 'em you mean," she replies, and continues, "Say, if it wasn't for we women, where would you men be?" He answers, "In the Garden of Eden, playing ping-pong with a female monkey." "Oh yeah," she says, "well, if it wasn't for we women, who'd sew the buttons on your pants?" "If it wasn't for you women," he says, "us men wouldn't need any pants." "Is that so?" she asks, "Suppose there wasn't a woman on this earth, then what would you men do?" The record ends with his response, which is to sing, "Oh the sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn," as he walks off the microphone.

Although the man gets the last word, and the woman is still essentially acting as a straight man, the eruption of conflict points to the "risk" of giving the woman an equal footing in the erotic frame, where she might become unruly or threatening. Recall Allen's description of the later years of the burlesque stage, which featured the mute female visual spectacle, addressed by a talking man. In contrast, here we find a dynamic where both man and woman speak and are in the same information state. The woman is allowed to be in the erotic key without becoming a spectacle. The potential power of the speaking female figure is enacted here in the record's denouement: the man retreats offstage, his joke reflecting defeat as much as sarcasm.

Compare this dynamic with the double-entendre-laden dialogue found in some film noir of the 1940s. Take, for example, the horseracing imagery, reminiscent of the record "Just Another Mount" described above, from the 1946 film *The Big Sleep*:

> VIVIAN STERNWOOD (LAUREN BACALL): Well, speaking of horses, I like to play them myself, but I like to see them work out a little first, see if they're front-runners or come-from-behind, find out what their whole kind is, what makes them run.
>
> PHILIP MARLOWE (HUMPHREY BOGART): Find out mine?
>
> STERNWOOD: I think so.
>
> MARLOWE: Go ahead.
>
> STERNWOOD: I'd say you don't like to be rated; you like to get out in front, open up a lead, take a little breather in the backstretch and then come home free.
>
> MARLOWE: You don't like to be rated yourself.
>
> STERNWOOD: I haven't met anyone yet who can do it. Any suggestions?
>
> MARLOWE: Well, I can't tell until I've seen you over a distance of ground. You've got a touch of class, but I'm not sure how far you can go.
>
> STERNWOOD: A lot depends on who's in the saddle.

While Bacall's deep, husky voice helps to make her a spectacle, it is notable that she is clearly in the erotic frame with the male noir protagonist.[34] On "He Put the Dix in Dixie," this frame equality led to tensions between the male and female participants, and the eventual retreat of the man. Many writers have noted how the sexual woman, or femme fatale, of film noir has a

certain power that is typically presented as a danger to the male character.[35] While the power and danger of the femme fatale has often been described in terms of the visual image of the woman, or her effect on the narrative, when these performances are seen in the context of the blue discs, part of the threat of the femme fatale can be seen to be her equal engagement with men in these verbal erotic performances.

Man And Woman Are Both Out

On some recordings, the man and woman are *both* out of the erotic frame. Here, there is no specific sense of audience collusion with a particular character. On "The First Night" (Off the Record 11BH), we hear a situation that is not clearly keyed for the audience, forcing us to infer the situation. A man's voice says, "Aw come on, let's try it once more." "No," replies a woman, "I'm tired, and besides it's too big, you'll never get it in." "But we've got to get it in," the man says, "You want to enjoy your honeymoon, don't ya?" "Say," she says, "Maybe if I sit on it, it'd be easier." Excited, the man answers, "Hey, let's try it that way, it might work swell!" Like the pretended-obscene riddle, the audience infers an obscene situation: that the couple is engaged in sexual intercourse. It is only in the last few seconds of the recording that we are let in on the real situation: "Boy, we've got enough in that steamer trunk to fill a moving van." This gag relies on the sound-only nature of the record, and so is one of the most "phonographic" of blue discs. While it borrows jokes and riddles that easily could have been performed on the burlesque stage, it is hard to imagine the bit being successfully performed in any arena except the sound-only phonograph recording.

Pretended-obscene riddles were originally performed in the face-to-face, co-present contexts of the burlesque stage and riddle-telling, where risk in performance is high. Kwesi Yankah writes that "the simultaneity of performance and evaluation" in such co-present forms makes them "a voluntary exercise in risk-taking."[36] The consideration of dynamics of risk in performance can help to explain some aspects of their form. There is heightened risk involved in the performance of erotic or obscene material. The performer could potentially offend the audience, or even, as with the case of the burlesque stage, be held criminally responsible. Hence humor plays an important function in that it minimizes the risks in performance. Brown writes that the pretended-obscene riddle "has an inherent cleverness that differentiates it from blatantly obscene folklore forms."[37] Also, the dual level of the pretended-obscene joke means that the obscenity is always inferred by the listener, and so can potentially be denied by the performer. The author of the obscenity is arguably the audience, not the performer.

On recordings, the performer is separate in time and place from the audience, often anonymous and so unaccountable, making an erotic performance less risky. Verbal forms like the riddling described above offer a level of safety unneeded in the new context of the anonymous phonograph performance. But these are more than just residual oral forms, and work in interesting ways in the recorded context. Because they invite a high level of audience participation they make the experience of the recording more immediate. Similarly, Hullum describes how the pretended-obscene riddle "may be interpreted as a threat to face" and so can lead to what Goffman calls "interchange": a sequence of acts set in motion "by an acknowledged threat to face and terminating in the re-establishment of ritual equilibrium."[38] This makes a pre-recorded performance take on aspects of the face-to-face: it seems more interactive, ritualized, participatory and, not coincidentally, erotic.

Hard Core Sound

If aspects of the pretended-obscene riddle are more apt in face-to-face or stage contexts, there is another kind of performance found on blue discs that takes fuller advantage of the phonographic context. This can be compared to Williams' mode of visual pleasure in film pornography that is distinguished by identification with a "surrogate male," and a further organization of screen elements into narrative events. This mode, which Williams associates with the hard core feature film, seeks to prove not only that penetration has taken place, but also satisfaction.

Sound plays an important role in this project by seeming to authenticate the pleasure of the female performers: female voices serve as "aural fetishes of the female pleasure we cannot see."[39] This is a type of verbal performance that Cante and Restivo call "porno-performativity."[40] The apparent spontaneity of the female performer's moans and sighs is particularly important in the pornographic quest to represent the female desires and pleasures that come from "deep inside." Using the terminology of Dell Hymes, porno-performativity seeks to present a "breakthrough" out of performance. For Hymes, performance is an "emergent," "unfolding or arising" mode of communication that occurs within a specific context. He examines mo-

"Hey folks, gather around. Here's a pip of a story about a man known to his many girlfriends as Silent George. . . ."

ments in anthropological fieldwork when modes like the "report" break through into full-fledged performance.[41] I want to read this dynamic the other way around, and see porno-performativity as a mode which attempts to enact a breakthrough *out* of performance, thereby offering a tantalizing suggestion of the authentic and spontaneous "real" expression, via traces of the body in spasm.[42] While becoming the central component of the sound in porn films, this kind of dynamic can be found on only one of the blue discs I've heard, called "Silent George."

The record begins by being keyed as a public performance: the listener is addressed as one of a group. "Hey folks, gather around. Here's a pip of a story about a man known to his many girlfriends as Silent George. Now the time is midnight and Mary Jones, a beautiful young girl, is in her bedroom asleep." There is a knock on the door. Mary whispers, "Oh my goodness, a burglar. But it might be, gosh, I hope it isn't who I think it is." Further knocks, and then the door opens. "George, what on earth!" Mary states, "What are you doing out here? You know how Daddy feels about us keeping late hours. No George, you cannot come in this time of night."

For the rest of the record, we are encouraged to identify with George, who lives up to his moniker, remaining utterly silent throughout the proceedings. George's actions are revealed through Mary's half-whispered statements: he comes in, takes off his coat, sits on the bed, takes off his shoes, and gets under the covers. Throughout all of this, Mary has been protesting and threatening to call her "Daddy" ("Daddy might come in!"). George becomes more aggressive, kissing her breast, fondling Mary ("No, please don't put your hand down there on me"), and her protests become more desperate: "George, you're forcing me, why do you have to be so rough?" As the record builds to its (literal) climax, Mary cries out. These cries ("Daddy, Daddy, oh Daddy") become moans of ecstasy, and the record ends with a thrown away "punch line" ("George, I'll give you just four hours to take that big thing out of me.")

This record, with its talking woman and mute man, presents a strange inversion of the late burlesque stage. On "He Put the Dix in Dixie," where both man and woman had been in on the erotic key, the woman spoke but avoided becoming a spectacle. On "Silent George," only the woman speaks, and her performance becomes a kind of striptease, a verbal spectacle. Prosodic play is limited by the whispered nature of Mary's speech, but in the "porno-performativity" at the end of the record, prosody takes center stage, suggesting a tantalizing "breakthrough out of performance" to the spontaneous expression of sexual pleasure. This is not the leering prosodic play of Mae West though, and on the level of narrative, Mary is certainly not in control of the situation.

The duration and intensity of Mary's performance overwhelms the punch line she throws away at the end of the record. Humor is mobilized to "legitimate" this performance, but works much differently than on other blue discs. Humor is clearly not the main object of pleasure here: it is Mary's breathless moans, and voyeuristic identification with George. The lack of humor on this record recalls the distinction made by Penley between the stag film and the hardcore feature film: "As porn films 'progressed' as film, technically and narratively, and began to focus on the woman and her subjectivity, they became more socially conservative as they lost the bawdy populist humor whose subject matter was so often the follies and foibles of masculinity."[43] Additionally, the empty silent space of identification with George becomes unsettling and vaguely sinister, and doesn't quite work: the opening key to the group audience ("Hey folks, gather around") is in tension with the rest of the record, where Mary addresses the listener as an individual.

"Silent George" suggests a mode of verbal performance of an erotic similar to the hardcore feature, where narrative, identification, and a "surrogate male" figure are key elements. It suggests this mode of performance, without fully embodying it: vacillating between addressing a group or an individual, and employing both humor and porno-performativity without much success on either front.[44] This record's use of porno-performativity makes it arguably more "phonographic" than other blue discs, since that mode takes advantage of the anonymity, and resulting reduction of risk, inherent in a pre-recorded performance.

Kaja Silverman has argued that the female voice "functions as a fetish within dominant cinema." The male voice in film tends to be situated "in a position of apparent proximity to the cinematic apparatus" via non-diegetic narration, thus revealing a "certain aspiration . . . to invisibility and anonymity." By contrast, the female voice is isolated from "all productivity,"

becoming identified with "spectacle and the body": "At its most crudely dichotomous, Hollywood pits the disembodied male voice against the synchronized female voice."[45] Amy Lawrence analyzes specific performances by Ingrid Bergman and Rita Hayworth where the woman's voice becomes an "audio-fetish," when, "rather than the woman *using* her voice to communicate, the voice communicates the body as *object*, bypassing any attempts at female subjectivity or female control of signification."[46]

"Silent George" certainly embodies some of these dynamics: the mute male becomes associated with the recording apparatus, and the prosodic spectacle of the woman's voice communicates her objectified body. But at the same time, Mary is the narrator: the sole disembodied speaker on the record who literally constructs the narrative. She is using her voice in a structuring way at the same time that her voice becomes an audio-fetish. This record then, and the medium of the recorded blue disc more generally, seems to fall outside some of the ways that the woman's voice has been categorized in film theory: it embodies both narrative pleasure *and* the spectacle—it is both disembodied and objectified.

Because blue discs are a nexus of erotic forms and performances, their study can serve as a productive step in Penley's call to study pornography as popular culture. As with Penley's argument about stag films, humor is a central component of blue discs, although in contrast to Penley's argument about the stag film, the man is not typically the butt of the joke. They overlap with a tradition of joke and riddle-telling, but take advantage of the different dynamics of risk in performance found on phonographic recording. Blue discs can be seen as part of a continuum of reception, with the listeners at the tavern jukebox or stag party placed beside the audience of the stag film and the social performances of pretended-obscene riddles. Female voices are central to these performances, representing varying degrees of agency and objectification. These records elaborate more fully what Allen's history of the burlesque stage has shown; that there is transgressive power in a female performance which combines the verbal and the erotic, a power which, for the sake of the male audience, is actively policed.

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I am indebted to Patrick Feaster, who introduced me to these records, along with many other phonographic wonders, and who has kindly made his collection available to me. I'd also like to thank Rachael Stoeltje, Greg Pierce and Joe Bussard for helping in my research, and Richard Bauman and James Naremore for reading and commenting on the essay.

Notes

1. Constance Penley, "Crackers and Whackers: The White Trashing of Porn," in *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, ed. Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray (New York: Routledge, 1997), 95-6.
2. Phonographic recordings with erotic content take a variety of forms. For this article, my main focus has been on those blue discs that are descriptive sketches, and not the large body of risqué songs also in circulation. I'm also not including in this study later adult comedy records by performers like Rusty Warren or Redd Foxx.
3. Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 282.
4. Ibid., 243.
5. Ibid., 238.
6. Ibid., 282.
7. Ibid., 240.
8. Andre Millard, *America On Record* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170.
9. Ed Cray, *The Erotic Muse* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), xxx.
10. Personal interview, February 5, 2003.
11. Noted collector of comedy records Rev. Warren Debenham has discussed "The Crepitation Contest," saying that "there exist maybe 18 different editions of the same material. . . . This record probably originated as a silly improvised contest, much like a garage band—and it became part of the culture." Indeed, Debenham stated that "as kids we would play this when our parents were gone," and that "people of my generation remember it fondly; it's a part of our growing up" (from V. Vale and Andrea Juno, *Re/Search: Incredibly Strange Music, Volume II* [San Francisco: Re/Search Publications, 1994], 144-5).
12. Millard, 168-9.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Anna McCarthy, "The Front Row Is Reserved for Scotch Drinkers: Early Television's Tavern Audience," in *Television: The Critical View*, ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Oxford, 2000), 455.
16. Linda Williams, *Hard Core* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 295.
17. 1950s risqué comedienne Rusty Warren, famous for her "Knockers Up!" routine, described her records as always being "a shared experience": "You never sat alone and listened with earphones like people do today in the '90s. I was a "party album" concept—you shared my records with

friends at a barbecue or a party" (*Re/Search: Incredibly Strange Music, Volume II*, 56).

18. Williams, 295.
19. Amy Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), 29.
20. Ibid., 32.
21. Williams, 80.
22. Waln K. Brown, "Cognitive Ambiguity and the 'Pretended Obscene Riddle,'" in *Keystone Folklore*, vol. 18 (1973): 90.
23. Jan Hullum, "The 'Catch' Riddle: Perspectives from Goffman and Metafolklore," in *Folklore Annual*, vol. 4-5 (1972-73): 54.
24. Brown, 90.
25. Jan H.Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore* (New York: Norton, 1986), 95.
26. Williams, 74.
27. Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (New York: Harper, 1974), 133-4.
28. Gershon Legman, *No Laughing Matter* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana. Press, 1982), 377.
29. In Richard Bauman's terms, the moment when the woman is "let in" on the joke is when the fabrication is discredited. Bauman describes five main components in the phase structure of first-person narratives about practical jokes. First is orientation, a section that "sets out the factors that bring the participants into place for the practical joke," as well as the means "for enacting it." Second is the setup, where the engineering of the trick and "the mobilization of the means to set up the fabrication" are recounted. Third is the trick event itself: a recounting and enactment of the "actual working of the key fabrication on the dupe." Notably, this usually includes the "effect of the fabrication on the victim," such as "embarrassment, confusion, guilt, and loss of face." Following the trick event is the discrediting of the fabrication: "After the victim endures his discomfiture for a while, the fabrication frame is broken and the working of the joke is revealed." Finally, the stories close with an evaluation of "the efficacy of the practical joke" (*Story, Performance, and Event* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986], 45).
30. Sigmund Freud, *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1916), 139, 141.
31. Penley, 95.
32. Matthew Murray, "Broadcast Content Regulation and Cultural Limits, 1920-1962" (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1997), 118.
33. Ibid., 117.
34. Amy Lawrence includes Bacall in a group of "female stars of the 1930s" like Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, and Joan Crawford, who were "fetishized for their low voices": "All sported glamorous, ambiguous images and low voices noted by critics and fans" (*Echo and Narcissus*, 88). Lawrence places this trend in the context of discourses on the sound media that consistently asserted the technological "problem" of recording high-pitched female voices.
35. Janey Place, "Women in Film Noir," in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1998), 43.
36. Kwesi Yankah, "Risks in Verbal Art Performance," in *Journal of Folklore Research*, vol. 22, no. 2-3 (1985): 135.
37. Brown, 91.
38. Hullum, 56; Goffman, 56.
39. Williams, 80, 73, 123.
40. Rich Cante and Angelo Restivo, "The Voice of Pornography," in *Keyframes*, ed. Matthew Tinkcom and Amy Villarejo (New York: Routledge, 2001), 221.
41. Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough into Performance," in *Folklore: Performance and Communication*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth Goldstein (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 13, 24.
42. The quest for the evocative "breakthrough out of performance" can be described as the desire to transcend the way performance can "clothe" the performer, eloquently described in Roland Barthes' analysis of the striptease: "Thus we see the professionals of striptease wrap themselves in the miraculous ease which constantly clothes them, makes them remote, gives them the icy indifference of skilful practitioners, haughtily taking refuge in the sureness of their technique: their science clothes them like a garment" (*Mythologies* [New York: Hill and Wang, 1972], 86).
43. Penley, 101.
44. An early phonographic genre called "laughing records" is almost entirely the sound of unrestrained and unaccompanied laughter, and so is arguably another instance of "hard core sound." These records were made by various record labels throughout the first decades of the century. In the most prevalent model of the laughing record genre, a woman's laugh is at the heart of the elementary framing narrative. In fact, these records share much in common with other presentations of "women in spasm," including Charcot's photographic studies of hysteria, Muybridge's protocinematic representations, and early experiments with film (see Williams, 48, 52). As with this tendency found in some early films, the main object of pleasure on laughing records is the traces of a female body in spasm.
45. Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 38, 39.
46. Lawrence, 149.

Abstract The study of a genre of phonographic recordings called blue discs, made between the 1930s and 1950s, can help to bridge the gap between an oral tradition of erotic performance and film pornography, and also provide a case study in the use of women's voices in the sound media.

Reviews

In Praise of Love (Éloge de l'amour)

Director/Writer: Jean-Luc Godard. Producers: Alain Sarde, Ruth Waldburger. Cinematographers: Julien Hirsch, Christophe Pollock. Avventura Films and Studio Canal. U.S. Distribution: Manhattan International Pictures.

The question is by now a decades-old staple of film criticism: What happened to Jean-Luc Godard? "He's all washed up now. He's sick . . . I don't know what's wrong with him." That this pronouncement is made in one of Godard's own films (by the character who is his niece in *Prénom Carmen* [1982]) might seem to confirm the majority verdicts of terminal reflexivity and deconstructive self-absorption. Godard's more recent *In Praise of Love* (2001) may initially appear to be more of the same, and is certainly true to the formally intriguing but willfully recondite style of his latter works. The film is, however, also strangely insinuating, and Godard's method cannot be dismissed as simple contrariness because it works to suggest a coherence and purpose in the film's relentless accumulation of ideas and emotion. *In Praise of Love* may thus mark a renewed attempt at communicating with an audience, one that seeks to provoke an interactive and constructive response from the viewer rather than to win our passive acquiescence in some contrived effect. Apart from this significance in terms of Godard's oeuvre, one of the film's major themes—the relation between Europe and America—is of considerable political relevance, with a potentially revealing parallel in the way the visceral hostility to America expressed in the film proves to be both a distraction from and sign of the unresolved contradictions of Western history that it exposes as the core of our contemporary predicament.

In Praise of Love insists on a disjointed narrative that disorders filmic time and identities, but only to invite the viewer to make non-linear or transverse connections between images, and between image and sound—a possibility explicitly suggested in the film itself. These connections can amount to a kind of circuit that generates ideas and relations that are dynamic rather than static, thought and rethought through the film. Viewed in this way, *In Praise of Love* is not a product but an act, a working at and toward. While unfinished and open, what it is that it works toward becomes clear after considering the array of misconceptions that follow from reading its surface content.

The film is divided into two parts, with the first, set in the present, followed by events from the recent past that involve characters from the first half but are only tenuously related to it. (One consequence of this structure is that past and present must communicate across a break in time without ever falling into place on some continuous narrative timeline.) In the film's second half, we see an old couple's story of their experience in the French Resistance purchased by the crudely named Spielberg Associates to be made into a film, with the direct involvement of the U.S. State Department. These scenes are replete with acidic and simplistic caricaturing of Americans one imagines Godard has painstakingly honed over long years of fuming over the state of the world. Given this explicit theme, the second half of the film might appear to explain the first, in which a young man named Edgar fails both to make a film and to love an unnamed girl whom he has already met as the old Resistance couple's granddaughter. Putting the two halves together would suggest Godard's moral to be that love and art are impossible in an era of globalization for which America is responsible.

However, the film is less obvious but equally unrelenting in its criticism of France, primarily for its failure to remember the Holocaust and its fictitious memory of the Resistance. If one insists on a moral, it would treat the girl's eventual suicide, if not also Edgar's inability to make his film, as delayed consequences of the Holocaust as much as the work of Hollywood. This might only suggest a new and larger indictment of Godard on a charge of generalized misanthropy, but the film's hostility to the contemporary West is only the most pointed element in a position that, once fully developed, takes on a complicated tone not simply of bitterness, but also of mourning and, in a way, hope.

The effect of this on the viewer is elusively stirring and disconcerting, a goad to thought—or prelude to frustration. Understanding is possible, but only if we are open to an experience that is compelling without being definitive, and only in retrospect, after seeing the entire film. This is one effect of *In Praise of Love's* driving us to make non-linear connections between its elements—to push us into memory, of the film itself in the first place, then of the history it implicates. Consistent with a formula offered by the girl, "There can be no resistance without memory or universalism," the memory that is facilitated by the film's disrupted narrative offers a resistance to the formal-

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PHOTOFEST

Bruno Putzulu as Edgar.

ization of the present as the conclusion to an accepted but fictional historical narrative. It resists by recognizing ours as a past whose memory must rupture any narrative, any status quo, and so must expose the present in its openness to the future. But the film does not present some alternate, "corrected" history with moral or practical implication because it also recognizes as a historical reality the non-existence of the sort of coherent, objective gaze which might stabilize our image of the past or present. Godard's resistance to assuming such a gaze argues against interpreting this idiosyncratic and demanding film as an expression of auteurist fundamentalism, as the obsessive pursuit of some individual "vision."

Approaching the film from this perspective allows us to make sense of all Godard's choices as something other than empty aestheticization—not just the dismembered narrative and fractured emotional tone, but also the film's look and style. Its very disjointed first half, unfolding in stark black-and-white images frequently disrupted by prolonged moments of a blank screen, evokes a present deformed by the presence of something like repressed memory, one whose harsh truths appear in the second half in color-saturated video of an almost painful excess. These truths are not psychological but historical, and they expose the fictionalizing of our own history and the appropriation of others' as not exclusively European or American, but related practices which evade the legacy of our past.

In Praise of Love is ostensibly about the failures of love and life and more profoundly about the potentially redemptive power of memory, which suggests an analogy to *Remembrance of Things Past*. The opening to memory comes through the gaps in *In Praise of Love* rather than through recognition of recurrences, as in Proust's novel. And the effect is not personal and aesthetic, remaking a failed life as art, but political and functional, resisting the idea of our history as a narrative already written and decided.

The Present: Failure of Film, Love, and Memory

Rather than a narrative, the film offers fragments of narrative which, though grouped into present and past, relate to each other without resulting in a story with a linear trajectory. They also relate to, and more effectively, through, the profusion of voiceover aphorisms which often repeat in scenes that might then be juxtaposed to each other. These aphorisms are usually Edgar's, but sometimes voiced by others who are only vaguely identified. They are often recognizable quotes from other works, which only makes us unsure how much more of the dialogue we attribute to the film's

characters is in fact from outside it. All this means that there is no identifiable or consistent point of view through which we can order the film's fragmented narrative so that it sustains fully-fledged characters, yet they also do not quite reduce to ciphers which might then expose Godard's own perspective.

In Praise of Love begins in present-day Paris with Edgar's attempt to make a film, which reunites him with an unnamed girl whom he wants to involve in the project. Because we are yet to learn how Edgar came to know her in the past, Godard manages to make the girl appear mysterious and prosaic at the same time. As will be the case throughout, the mood produced by the visual style is more accessible than the story, with which it fuses only in *In Praise of Love*'s concluding moments. Shot in 35mm black-and-white, this is a present that might be mistaken for the past (given that black-and-white is habitually used for flashbacks). Its stark, beautiful images also evoke our memory of the Paris of French film and seem to invite us to slip into some nostalgic gaze—only to disrupt it with pauses, gaps, and black leader. This section of the film is comprised of oddly framed scenes replete with unexpected juxtapositions and abrupt transitions, stark differences that appear in the black-and-white medium, with its contrasts and shadings, as part of a continuum of disjointed actuality.

The two halves together would suggest Godard's moral to be that love and art are impossible in an era of globalization for which America is responsible.

Edgar's film is apparently about love, yet the little we learn of its content has no direct relation to this theme, such as that "she" wears a yellow star to please "him" and is beaten unconscious by some fascists, and that the project "can't help but depict the down-and-out." Edgar wants to capture the phases of love through a "trinity of stories," each representing a couple in one of the ages of love: youth, adulthood, and old age. We see the actors rehearsing dialogue or Edgar making pronouncements which are in themselves gratuitous or obscure, but (eventually) prove useful in understanding the second half of *In Praise of Love*: "In youth, it is not Eglantine's story but a moment in history, history moving through Eglantine." "When you see someone old or young, you recognize them instantly, but with an adult, it's anything but obvious. They're never entirely naked . . . they have to have a story." Edgar will ultimately conclude that adults don't really exist and abandon his film project, apparently for this reason. All that would seem to follow from the first half of the film seen in isolation is that, outside of fiction, lovers are too young or too old to be in love, so that love is an unrepresentable something that can only be lost in the present and recovered in memory.

Monsieur Rosenthal, Edgar's financier, says the film is to be called "Something to Love . . . In Praise, I think," which might identify Godard's as Edgar's unmade film, with the recurrent intertitles in the first section, "Of Something" and "Of Love," suggesting Edgar's film being progressively realized in Godard's. But *In Praise of Love* more effectively unmakes Edgar's film by showing us in its second half the experience on which he has based it. Much of the dialogue for Edgar's film turns out to be a reworking of his conversations with the unnamed girl when they first met amid the negotiations between Spielberg Associates and her grandparents. Learning that he failed to really know her then, we realize we have already seen this failure repeated in the film's first half, that Edgar was considering using the girl in his film as little more than a representation of the feeling she evoked in him.

Behind Edgar's film is another history, whose failure he may also repeat: Rosenthal was in unrequited love with Edgar's mother, who committed suicide, as does the girl. However, there is a larger history at work. The money for the film appears to come from a recovered art collection that Rosenthal built up in partnership with Edgar's grandfather, who was "arrested in the '42 roundup" (which means that Edgar is Jewish, though this is never made explicit). When someone observes that memory has obligations, Rosenthal replies "No, the right. Memory has no obligations." Just as he acts in the memory of a failed love, so Edgar will act out of a failure to love. They attempt to act not out of some impossible, inexplicable obligation-compulsion to repeat or recompense, but out of the right to relive a past that has failed to sustain itself in the world because of the history to which it belongs. This act of remembrance is perhaps one moment—the last, failing act—of love.

Edgar recognizes history as essential to his film, yet it is before history that it fails. He must have the three ages of love, or the project is "dead. It becomes a story . . . Hollywood. Not History." Despite this awareness, Edgar ends up attempting (and failing) to film a story of love in place of a love he could not realize, but this is only because he cannot find his way, in film or in life, to something else: love in the context of history. But Godard's film subsumes Edgar's. If Edgar is young, so that history moves through him, then Godard is Edgar aged, his film a memory of the

failure of adult love that becomes a thinking through of the failure to love in history.

The Past: Remembering the Absence of Love in the Presence of History

The first section ends without any real resolution as Edgar learns the girl is dead, several years after having abandoned his film project and possibly, from his ambiguous remarks, after some abortive relationship with her. As he takes from among her things a novel entitled "Edgar's Journey," its front cover promptly opens onto the second part of the film. This appears initially to be the story of Edgar and the girl's first meeting, suggesting the journey into the past is Edgar's attempt at a Proustian recovery of the girl, at finding his love for her in memory.

But the past follows on from the present in *In Praise of Love* for a more fundamental reason. At one point, Edgar observes, "You can only think about something if you think of something else," from which it follows that a film's diegetic present cannot be seen or understood in itself, only through the relations in which it figures. If, as Edgar also says, to see for the first time is to compare, then to think of the present is to reach for the past, to recognize the past in the present. So the film moves from present to past, in a way that works to place both within the medium of memory.

Within this logic, it is tempting to interpret the moments of blankness interposed between images in the first part of the film as the space in which the continuous turning of thought to something else reaches its inevitable limit—the past. It may be because the presence of this past remains mute and unacknowledged that the present appears disrupted and broken, a series of discontinuous vignettes lost amid amnesiac languor. We might then anticipate that remembering the past in the second half of the film will fill in the gaps and restore some narrative completeness to its first half.

This act of remembrance is perhaps one moment—the last, failing act—of love.

However, it proves significant that the gap between parts of the film is filled with the image of a novel, of a past fiction. We find Edgar in the second part researching a book on Catholics in the Resistance, while the girl resists Spielberg Associates' purchase of her grandparent's history in the Resistance, so that what we expect to be the couple's story steadily gives way to stories of other, past loves and acts of resistance, a stream of memories that pour into the impersonal context of history. The setting for this is the Brittany coast, the border and join between land and sea, France and England, which proves to be yet another gap that, like the gap between young and old, stories may fill but fail to bridge. We are returned to the fundamental gap between present and past, which we can cross only by finding non-narrative, non-fictional links between them —and only once we accept that the past, though it opens up in the form of a personal memory, dissolves into history itself.

The second half unfolds in color-saturated digital video, revealing the past in the full force of its vitality, but also its excess, which conveys something more than Edgar's alienation from a possible love: the otherness of history moving through us. As if to illustrate this, the second half of the film is punctuated with increasing insistence by images of the sea, which are associated with history through the accompanying dialogue or voiceover. The sea first appears stopped (in a freeze-frame), only to move again, lapping at beaches and crashing into walls, until finally, superimposed on an image of Edgar preparing to leave, it seems to have entered the room and inundated him, although he cannot sense it. The sea here is not simply a visual metaphor but figures in one of the superimpositions of images which form part of the fabric of this section of the film, exposing the remembered past as being, like any object of thought, composite, at once itself and something else.

The presence of the "something else" of history is manifest on the narrative level initially as a source of tension and disruption, though it will finally become the medium through which the film's story fragments can relate. Spielberg Associates intend to retell the old Resistance couple's history as a love story, and we learn it almost was one—except that "the English were not very orthodox" and he was forced to betray her so he could infiltrate the Gestapo. We see preparations under way for the fictionalizing of the past: a long-beached boat spray-painted with "La France Libre" is the reconstruction of the boat the couple used to cross the English Channel. More than rewriting the couple's past, the Spielberg Associates' film might be seen as replacing or repressing a French memory of resistance with an American story of the Resistance. Yet as Edgar researches his book, what we learn suggests that the Resistance was already a story, a fiction written into French collective memory, which is only being remade by the Americans. We hear that the Resistance was controlled from London and comprised of monarchists and Catholics, the reactionary element in French history that always retreats to England because that is

where it came from. The Spielberg film's crossing of the Channel will recreate an actual event that was always a kind of fiction in that what was enacted as a flight to a separate country was a movement within a common history. This is a further signification of the coastal setting: the border between France and England is the sea, which is—like the history with which it is associated—open, indefinite, a flux of overlapping tides in communication.

Finally, these historical tides are all that remain to reunite the two halves of the film. The girl's suicide, for instance—which, considered as the conclusion to the first half, makes little sense and leaves the viewer unmoved—may instead be seen as the conclusion to her grandmother's history. Madame Bayard converted from Judaism to Catholicism in Ravensbruck concentration camp after meeting Genevieve de Gaulle. We might set this in terms of the ages of love: She was young, and acted as if the self she was no longer existed so as to become the fighter she had to be. Now in old age, we find her lost in memory, attempting to recover this moment when history was moving through her. But Godard forces us to see this politically, which, rather than giving it an abstract meaning, works to retrospectively diffuse through the film the emotional charge of the scene near its end in which the girl confronts her grandmother. The girl asks a simple question: Why didn't her grandparents change their surname back to Samuel after the war and instead kept their codename? Madame Bayard must remember her assumption of a new self, which might otherwise seem to be a free existential choice, in its confining historical context, made under the pressure of French anti-Semitism. The France she fought for is exposed as an ideal she has always known does not exist.

The France she fought for is exposed as an ideal she has always known does not exist.

Abandoning her Jewish identity approaches an act of suicide, killing the self she was. Yet that self still existed in memory—until it is sold as a story, and then it as if her life ended when she changed her name, from which it follows that her granddaughter cannot exist in the story that is present-day France. One consequence of this is that it is not the failure of the past but the failure to remember (the past, in its failure) that closes off the present. It is significant that the girl has no name in the first half, but has one in the second—Samuel, the family name her father reassumed (so that Edgar fails to know her by her Christian name, while she can be known by her Jewish surname). It is as if she must be nameless in the first half because her grandparent's have sold their history, while the name she has in the second half, in memory, is not personal, but places her in history.

Just as Edgar's film would have done, the second half of *In Praise of Love* presents a young couple, Edgar and the girl, through whom history moves, and an old, the Resistance couple lost in memory. Adulthood is here too, but only as the fictional state in which we imagine ourselves in a story, having written over the gaps between youth (not knowing oneself, being in history) and age (knowing oneself as living in memory). Most obviously, the gap is to be paved over with a fiction of adulthood in the Spielberg film which will imagine away the couple as they were, young, manipulated by others (he London, she Gaullists), and as they are now, two people complicit in lies which lie between them. But we also see this gap relived alone and in silence as the girl confronts her grandmother with their memory. Only the girl will retain this memory, which is not so much the "factual" truth of the past as it is knowledge of the falsity of the stories of it which are told, retold, and, eventually, sold. In the girl's fate, the past proves inescapable, but also, as personal memory borne alone, unlivable.

Anti-Americanism in Relation to French History

While French characters recognize, and fail to recognize, the myriad failings of their history, Americans, indifferent to the truth of a highly compromised Resistance, appear interested only in taking from it a story they can film. The caricatured American gaucherie and French intellectualized bitchiness steal the show and obscure a pattern in which, consistently, the film's most overt criticisms of America appear in juxtaposition with the compromised nature of French resistance to fascism. This opens onto a subterranean network of connections that implicate the Holocaust as the primary historical event against which the film's critical treatment of both France and America is set.

For instance, during one scene in the first half of the film—set in a bookshop, a warehouse of history and fiction intermingled—an American journalist recounts atrocities he witnessed in Kosovo while an unanswered telephone rings, ignored by both the American, intent on telling his story, and the French, who shudder at his accent while browsing through books.

The Holocaust is the subject of the only phone conversation we hear in the film, which could be considered as the "answer" to the ringing telephone in this scene. Preceding the phone conversation is a fleeting scene in which we see Edgar waiting for a train that stops at a platform with the sign "Drancy Avenir." After an abrupt cut to the girl on the telephone in the bookshop, we hear Edgar ask in voiceover who could connect Drancy (site of a transit camp from which Jews were transported from France for extermination) with the future (Fr. *avenir*=future). The girl replies, "Some family man who comes home from the office to tell his little girl he's worked well." Then this conversation—the last between Edgar and the girl—moves on to other, unrelated subjects. The viewer is left to make sense of a sequence of short scenes and truncated dialogue whose context is only implicit. But the girl answering Edgar's call from the bookshop (where she apparently lives) relates his question to the earlier bookshop scene. The consequence is to set the West's delayed response to the war in the former Yugoslavia—another unanswered call—against its inadequately remembered failure to prevent the Holocaust.

But the question of how to connect Drancy to the future resonates through the film in other ways. It is, in a sense, the challenge Edgar attempts and fails to meet in his film, given its purpose to capture several generations, including his own, in relation to history. His almost neurotic action when the Drancy train arrives—boarding it only to promptly step off—might remind us of the personal significance of this challenge, given that Edgar's grandfather would have passed through Drancy. The girl also fails to make the link between her history and present so that all these two characters have in common is the Holocaust, which fixes their desire, defining them, given their present, in terms of a lack and absence they must bear into a future which will not redress it.

Understanding the relation between the past evoked by Drancy and the future is also our challenge in trying to relate the two halves of *In Praise of Love,* as its first half is future to the second, which more explicitly recalls the time of which Drancy was a part. One continuity is suggested by the fact that a phone also rings unanswered in the second half of the film, at two points which, as in the first half, approach the unresolved ambiguities of France's relation to its Jews. Edgar, interviewing the French writer Jean Lacouture, happens to mention Simone Weil, a Resistance heroine who was born Jewish but came to espouse a mystical Christianity. Lacouture responds with a breathless reply that runs from Christianity to Shakespeare to England, a line that, for all its eloquence, neatly avoids thought of the Jewish convert. The second instance occurs in relation to an explicit Jewish convert to Christianity, Madame Bayard, coming just before her granddaughter's question and its implications.

Though the ringing phone may seem to function symbolically, representing the unanswered call of the Holocaust and European anti-Semitism, it would seem more consistent with Godard's approach to film to see it as offering access to a network of open connections. Thus the film may suggest contemporary antagonisms as the distorted surface expression of repressed historical traumas only as a first step, to lead us to open up this idea by putting it in relation to others, such as the ages of love. The association would not be reductive—for instance, opposing Europe as old, lost in memories unaware, to an America young, without memory, acting without history—as this is to treat America and France as "adult," as identities fixed in a story. We could instead regard the film's recall of France's forgotten history and its accusation of American appropriation of others' histories as presenting two intercommunicating forms in which the West forgets and fictionalizes the shared traumatic core of its origins and identities—imagining itself youthfully free of the weight of a history that it in fact carries, and offering sage pronouncements based on the lessons of a past it has never fully acknowledged. These delusions are, of course, not mutually exclusive.

The Holocaust in *In Praise of Love*: Remembering History without Representation

One can question whether suggestively cross-referencing across elements of a disjoint narrative is how Godard intended the film to be experienced. There is also a further issue of how any presence exposed by this approach, such as a memory of the Holocaust, may function.

Godard claims to have not really known what he was doing during the shooting but adds, "What I really enjoy is searching." He says of his aesthetic choices, "I use it without being able to say what I'm doing . . . If I think, that looks purposeful, then it's no good. But the moment you feel before you can put something into words, the moment when you come up with the idea, you feel happy."[1] Godard is clearly resistant to anything that appears "purposeful" in itself, to whatever might have representational or symbolic

significance, but the thinking of potential connections across elements of the film appears to be a form of the "searching" he praises. Our engagement in this process is acknowledged in the film itself several times, as for instance when the girl says, "The preterit creates a present image . . . Man manufactures ideas . . . ," and in Edgar's suggestion that to think of something is to think of something else. This would allow that we can, and will, compare images that accompany a voiceover aphorism to our memory of similar instances, or of sounds such as a ringing telephone, and "manufacture" an idea that adheres to the gap between images.

However, to the extent that this approach to the film appears legitimate, it would equally seem to preclude reading it in terms of a single exclusive meaning referenced through some privileged point of recurrent signification. Certainly, if the Holocaust is central to the history that *In Praise of Love* remembers, it does not define it exclusively. The film references the ever-growing list of similar events, and also remembers the thwarted desire for change of resistance movements like the French Resistance (even as it faces their failure to date). At times, it even seems to approach the Marxist analysis that Godard once espoused.

It could be argued that the extreme limits of narrative disintegration to which Godard's method has taken him result in a film that reaches simultaneously toward all meanings and none, so that uncovering an array of potential references to the Holocaust is at once inevitable and irrelevant. Yet Godard has said the film was made as a response to (the real, but unassociated) Spielberg's recreation of the Holocaust in *Schindler's List*.[2] The somewhat elusive nature of *In Praise of Love*'s consideration of the Holocaust is a consequence of refusing to represent it in a story. The film instead accepts the Holocaust—and the past it exemplifies—as an unthinkable reality whose legacy remains present and so resists the fiction implicit in narrativizing and sentimentalizing historical events such that their effect is past and defined.

This unthinkable historical legacy may account for and find expression in the mood of the film, pervading it as a gap between the film's elegiac tone and its more conventionally depressed characters. The difference between them is consistent with Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia, with the latter a consequence of the failure to mourn. The film itself is an act of mourning and remembrance, while its characters, particularly Edgar and the girl, are made melancholic by the experience of history moving through them, of being its passive object. Using Freud's arguments analogously here to the way they have been applied to the German reaction to the Holocaust would suggest that their melancholia is due to the characters being part of a society that has not faced its past, and so is haunted by it.[3]

While the condition of *In Praise of Love*'s characters separates them from the almost free-floating sadness that comes to suffuse the film itself, this gap may expose an opening for choice in how we relate to the lingering presence of past events like the Holocaust. We can face our history as the film does, mournfully but potentially constructively, or be mastered by it unawares. What might be seen as the larger political or social consequences of this condition are indirectly suggested at various points in the film. A conversation about history being replaced by technology, and politics by gospel, concludes that religion is then required to sustain a fiction of coherence. At another point, the observation that "the living dead of this world are modeled on the world as it was. . . . The way they think and feel comes from before," is set against the image of a youth silhouetted against the illuminated advertisement for *Pickpocket,* his cool pose an unwitting imitation of gestures familiar from Bresson films, emptied of their significance. These two instances evoke a society disconnected from its past and lost in a melancholy that can only be formalized in religion or concealed behind an image.

Certainly, if the Holocaust is central to the history that In Praise of Love *remembers, it does not define it exclusively.*

Apart from its implicit expression in the film's fractured mood, there is only one moment late in the film when Godard may allow the Holocaust something like direct presentation. This comes in some brief footage, which is never really identified, but is presumably from a videotape that the girl is searching for and which she tells Edgar shows "the gaze of the guilty on the innocent." The momentary sequence resembles the Holocaust scenes with which we are all familiar, of a room piled with corpses inspected by men in suits—one of whom looks like Hitler, but might just be a nondescript functionary with a moustache. Though it comes in the second half of the film, the footage is in black-and-white, which aligns it with the film's depiction of present-day Paris, allowing us to think it coming into the present, as if its time is still now. It is not the only black-and-white insert—photos of war and resistance appear in the sec-

ond part of the film, and of Rosenthal's beloved and the characters of their era in the first. These images seem at once ideal and real, lost to, and in, a time both past and present—except that that moment of video footage remains among them—moving, not frozen like the photos. It stands apart from, yet is a part of, the film's system of movement between color and black-and-white, at once giving meaning to and subverting the whole.

This fragmentary footage also carries a bewildering density of relations to images and sounds elsewhere in the film. Sometimes they have seemingly clear interpretations, such as the opposition between a proclamation of exploitative intent from the State Department official that accompanies the footage and a Bataille statement on the inability of the state to love quoted by the girl. Other connections are more subtle, such as that Edgar's question while the girl looks for the tape—"But to what extent does memory help us reclaim our lives?"—is almost echoed in words that answer it negatively in the first half and accompany a street scene of well-to-do Parisians, including Edgar, hurrying by oblivious to a homeless man. Relating the images would align the ignored homeless with the forgotten victims of fascism as objects of a "gaze of the guilty on the innocent" that extends from the past into our present; relating the words would suggest that while the possibility for memory to effect change appears foreclosed in the present, it is restored as an open question in the remembered past—though perhaps only to the extent that memory can reclaim the fragmentary presence of past trauma preserved in the video sequence. Finally, and inevitably with Godard, the footage is also accompanied by what would seem emphatically non-signifying, such as a voiceover coughing fit. There is in all this no sense in which the Holocaust is given representation. Rather, this is *presentation,* the exposure of a presence, in a moment that then extends throughout the film. And this presence remains for us to recognize, given that the video sequence is only elliptically identified and is as much a black hole as a nexus of meaning, functioning as a focus of more intense gravity toward which other material in the film is drawn to enter into a kind of orbit.

Godard's approach here may recognize what Edgar and the girl call "the collapse of the gaze." It is hard to be sure what this means; never really explained, the term is left to echo according to the theoretical predispositions of the viewer. It must, though, evoke what is so evident in *In Praise of Love*—a loss of coherence and fragmentation that is primarily social and only consequently personal, a world in which fictions are still circulated but can no longer be believed. The film also implicitly identifies the "collapse of the gaze" as a historical event. Edgar and the girl decide the gaze collapsed about 50 years ago, putting it at the same moment in time (probably) depicted in the videotape. She observes that, "the image, alone capable of denying nothingness, is also the gaze of nothingness upon us." The tape excerpt may identify fascism as the point on which this turns, where the image ceases to appear as the answer to nothingness, and begins instead to expose the annihilating gaze of nothingness upon us. The fascist gaze that unites leader and people in a dehumanized totality may be the prototype, but the "gaze of nothingness" equally describes a culture whose images (whether realistic or fantasy) of social life have been replaced by a ubiquitous and anonymous gaze on mass-media spectacle.

He never really sees the girl, only his own image of himself as moved by her ideas, and in this gaze, he loses both her and himself.

The girl is a victim of this gaze, not only in that her suicide is a delayed consequence of fascism as it reaches her through her grandmother, but also through the transformation of her—and our—history into an object for such a gaze, as in the Spielberg Associates' film. Less obviously, Edgar may end up unintentionally assuming the "gaze of nothingness." He never really sees the girl, only his own image of himself as moved by her ideas, and in this gaze, he loses both her and himself. But his failure is not personal. Edgar realizes that his film project fails because it cannot represent history, but it also fails because the unitary, coherent "adult" subject whose gaze could grasp and validate such a representation—the subject he desired to become—does not exist.

Godard's film, in contrast to Edgar's, begins from the fragmented condition of *both* the subject and object presumed by narrative history and narrative film. It sees in this condition a potential for change—in film and history—and so finds motive and rationale for resisting the conventions that govern both. The parallel between them is explicit: "Image and sound are vital to History, and most important is that basic element: not knowing how History will end." Just as the possible relations between images and sounds are opened up by the dissolution of narrative and the collapse of the gaze

that it implies, so a history of traumatic failures and ruptures is undetermined, its end unknown. The present order can be resisted by remembering the past that gave birth to it, and exposing its presumed stability and inevitability as fictions. *In Praise of Love* provides a model for this form of memory in the ideas it invites us to "manufacture" by thinking its various breaks and tensions —structural, narrative, and visual—in relation to its abundant material of historical anecdote. It is a model that recognizes history must overwhelm any attempt at representation or definition.

In Praise of Love concludes with the moment in which Edgar first gives voice to the idea he attempted to realize: "We have a project. It relates something of the history. . . . And this something is one of the moments. . . . And the first moment." The "we" is doubly significant. Edgar's project begins as an expression of some shared experience, which cannot yet be called "love," whose first moment he has experienced in Brittany, meeting the girl and recognizing the essential presence of history. He attempts to develop his idea with her for his film project: "Not your story or mine, but, whatever happens, our story. Even if we aren't acquainted. History." But, as his project and interest in the girl prove stillborn, the "we" slips away from Edgar and he falls back to an "I" that traces out the other moments of love in his failures to love her and capture her in his film. The trajectory of *In Praise of Love* undoes this failure, as it moves from Edgar's "I" to remember a "we" with which it leaves us. Edgar's idea describes Godard's film, a project that does not have a definite subject but seeks to relate "something of the history," a history that, at the same time, can and must be "the first moment" because it is present and open.

This project can be called *In Praise of Love* because it is dedicated to the idea of it. The circuits that run through the film cannot be purely mechanical because their material is not only its sounds and images but also the gaps between them. These circuits are thinking and feeling because they have in them this desire for love, which is also an act of mourning because it conceives love as lost, so that it is only in and through memory that it might be recovered. But this is only an abstract form of universalism; we are also made to remember a particular historical condition that it must resist. The present appears as a series of unbridgeable gaps—between Edgar and the girl, Europe and America, youth and age—rather than communicating differences because of a deeper blockage, the inability to acknowledge the past, specifically of fascism and the Holocaust. It is the presence of this past that energizes the film without allowing it to come to rest, much less to rest on a meaning. Our history cannot yet have one, for it must remain the unthinkable around which fictions circulate and against which they falter—at least, until it has been remembered.

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Notes

1. Wheeler Winston Dixon, "In Praise of Godard's *In Praise of Love*," *Film Criticism,* vol. XXVII, no 3. (Spring 2003): 23-4.
2. Ibid., 30.
3. See, for instance, Alexander Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* (New York: Grove Press, 1984).

Abstract *In Praise of Love*'s disjointed structure drives the viewer to perceive non-linear connections between its elements that then associate its critical account of the contemporary West with the forgotten and compromising truths of the Holocaust and fascism. Godard's style frustrates because it remembers our history as one that must rupture any narrative, resisting the formalization of the present as the conclusion to a fictional past and exposing its openness to change.

The Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies (AAADS) at Indiana University invites applications from scholars, at any rank, with excellent credentials in African American film. Areas of expertise may include (but are not limited to) black film history, the aesthetics of black film, black women filmmakers, and African Diasporan films. Applicants with senior rank should have an interest in assuming leadership of the Department's Black Film Center/Archive, which was established in 1981. Our repositories in African American film are among the richest in the country and complement other resources at Indiana University such as the Archives of African American Music and Culture, the Archive of Traditional Music, and the African American Arts Institute.

Applicants should send a cover letter detailing research, creative, and teaching interests and experiences, two writing samples, and three letters of recommendation. Review of applications will begin November 15, 2004 and will continue until the position is filled. Address applications to: Valerie Grim, Ph.D., Interim Chair, Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies, Memorial Hall East, Room 29, Indiana University, 1021 E. Third Street, Bloomington, IN 47405. Fax: 812-855-4432 or email: AAADS@exchange.indiana.edu. Applications from women and minority candidates are encouraged. Indiana University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Elephant

Director/Writer: Gus Van Sant. Producer: Dany Wolf. Cinematographer: Harris Savides. Editor: Van Sant. Distributor: Fine Line

PHOTOFEST

The crossing paths of high-school.

An 18-year-old friend of mine dyed his hair blue. When it began to grow out and I inquired whether he would be dying it blue again or perhaps another shade, he sighed and shook his head. "No," he said dully, as if making an effort to reply despite the sudden onset of a coma. "I wanted to make a statement, but I didn't know that I would have to talk about it all the time."

I imagine that, if alive to witness it, the Columbine killers would register the same kind of bored and irritated surprise that we continue to talk and talk about their actions without making material progress in our understanding. With only dim imaginings of the way we would collectively attempt to process Columbine, they were undoubtedly caught up in the immediacy of the *statement*, with little regard for its community aftermath. Perhaps Gus Van Sant's decision to focus his energies on depicting only the day of a high school massacre stems in part from his understanding of the myopia of adolescence. *Elephant* is an attempt to dodge the discussion and focus instead on chronicling the event.

Untangling the film's title, various critics have drawn on the idea of blind men describing parts of an elephant and also the elephant in the middle of the room that no one will discuss. In speaking to a group of university students at the Telluride Film Festival, Van Sant cited Alan Clarke's 1989 television film, *Elephant*, about violence in Northern Ireland as having had a profound impact on him. Thus, he claims that the film's metaphor-begging name is, in part, a nod to the other film of the same name. As much as school shootings are an American phenomenon, they nonetheless fit into a larger web of carefully planned violence of a sort that arrests our attention and compels us to feel around the edges of the issues again and again, searching for a point of entry.

Despite our best efforts, we simply don't quite know what to do with Columbine. By all evidence, the shootings that took place at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, seemed to have had the same spindly roots that feed all of our more mundane emotional turmoil in high school, and this defies understanding. The frightening thing about terrible events like Columbine is the remorseless ease with which they seem to take place and the fact that every proposed cause is nebulous and debatable, such that we cannot readily identify any remedy. *Elephant*, in spite of all professed designs to simply recreate the day, is nonetheless an investigation into the cause.

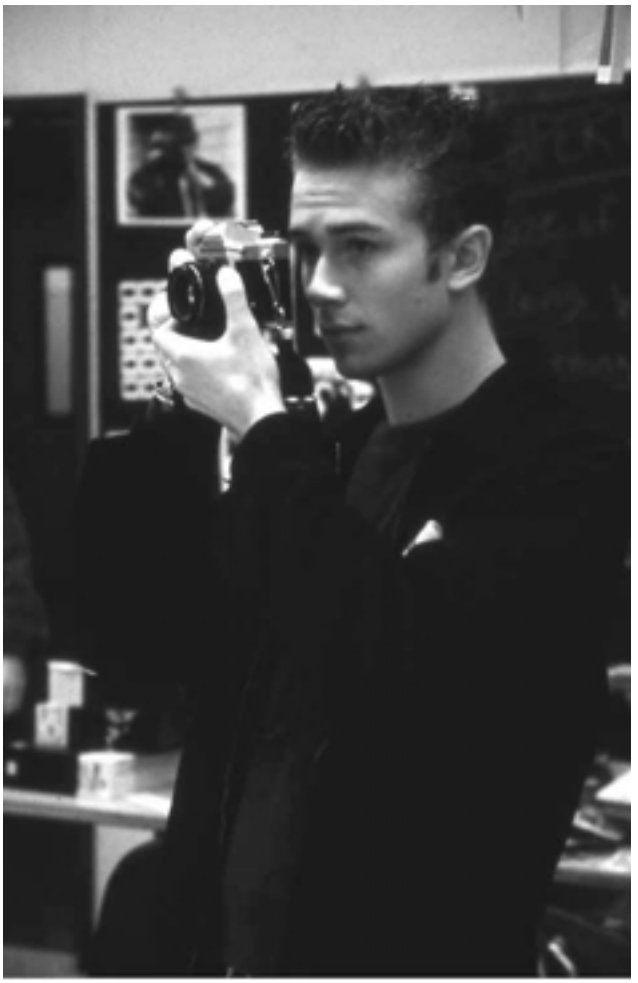
The film is most poetic in its first half—paced for waiting. Disaster looms, but in the meantime, here is an alcoholic father driving his son to school and bouncing off of every parked car along the way. Here is an easy-mannered aspiring photographer trudging across an endless expanse of school lawn, snapping portraits of fellow students as he passes. A casual game of football takes place on the lawn, players migrating in and out of the frame; cheerleaders practice in the middle distance, and as the painfully awkward "geek" passes before them all, we know that even as she is most visible to us, she is most invisible of all. Later she will huddle in the girls locker room, changing out of her gym clothes with the shrinking, hunched efficiency of one who fears some torture, ridicule, or other cruelty from her peers and yet it will not come. The popular boy and his popular girlfriend will converge and join atoms, walking the halls in the unnatural physical proximity that is the signature of adolescent couples. Van Sant grounds us in the visual throughout these many small introductions: super-long takes of characters traversing expanses of lawn and stretches of hallway keep us ever waiting—waiting for these kids to come, to go, to pass beyond our visual range, and perhaps later to

Film Quarterly, Vol. 58, Issue 2, pages 45-48. ISSN 0015-1386, electronic ISSN 1533-8630. © 2005 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, at www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm.

die. Much of the film's suspense is built on what we already know about its denouement. What we do not know is how the massacre will take place, who is marked for death, and how we are going to feel upon witnessing it. When the event is a locked destiny, we pore over the details along with Van Sant and experience the anxiety of awaiting the inevitable.

The largely unscripted dialogue meanders from mundane to idiotic, misinformed to self-absorbed, with almost depressing verisimilitude. This is high school, all right. And in slowing the pace, lavishing time on this chronicle of so much between-ness—between destinations, between class periods, and all the while on the cusp of adulthood—Van Sant captures something that lends a strange power to his film. There is no strong sense of purpose, no pressing task—no rush to arrive. This is high school as a holding cell—a containment facility for use during adolescence, that difficult transition period that cannot be sped up, only waited out. Van Sant maximizes this experience of relentless waiting not only through the long takes and the directionless conversations, but also by revisiting a handful of small interactions. Two boys, the gentle son of the alcoholic and the affable photographer, greet one another in the hall and exchange a few casual words; the photographer snaps a photo of his vamping friend and they part ways again. The awkward girl of track and locker room passes through the frame, again seemingly invisible to her peers though painfully visible to us. The sequence is revisited from the perspective of each student and though no new layers of insight about the characters emerge as we are linked to each point of view, the prismatic experience of the mundane further sharpens our sense of waiting. Disaster looms all the larger as we know that this trivial exchange will be rendered at once more trivial and more poignant for having taken place in innocence—before terror, sorrow, and confusion.

The film first stumbles when a clique of three particularly unappealing and vacuous girls enter the bathroom together, file into the stalls and, in an action that defies the documentary-like realness that has come before, collectively purge their lunches. This light parody signals the beginning of a shift in the film. As Van Sant subsequently turns his attention to the harbingers of disaster, he falls back on a kind of explanatory shorthand now all too familiar to us. The killers are, of course, steeped in Nazi history and violent video games. The more emotionally vulnerable-seeming of the two has, of course, been relentlessly targeted for spitballing and other tortures by the loathed and soulless jocks. Despite Van Sant's desire to avoid saddling his film with explanations, he locks a host of them into place by carefully sourcing his killers' inspirations in all the expected places. Even the contrary details do more to affirm the expected than to alleviate it. The fact that one of them plays Beethoven on the piano rather than listening to the much-reviled Marilyn Manson, for example, does not upend the predictability of cause. In this way, the characters become overdetermined—they cease to surprise us, even in the strangely humdrum moment of homoerotic connection between them before they embark on their spree. The two boys shower together before their mission and, intent on self-destruction as well as massacre, they comfortably discuss the fact of neither having ever been kissed. The mutual first kiss is so chaste and the boys so earnest that we can hardly construe it as a part of any pattern of suppressed desire. Van Sant gives us the kiss



PHOTOFEST

Elias McConnell (Elias) quietly pursues his work as disaster looms.

PHOTOFEST

Kristen Hicks as Michelle.

almost as an incidental detail, which, like the Beethoven, is intended to criss-cross the relentless certainty of the other explanations that have come into play. Nonetheless, Van Sant continues to play closely to expectation, and we weary of the killers and the unremarkable collection of identifiers with which he tags them. When the postman delivers the guns that the killers ordered online, we are inclined to think it natural that they would have procured their weapons through this anonymous, insufficiently regulated channel, but interestingly it is here that Van Sant departs from his Columbine source material because we know that those killers, in fact, used no such impersonal channels. The Columbine killers were abetted by several adults.

Mark Maynes was sentenced to prison for providing a handgun to Harris and Klebold. Phillip Duran was sentenced for supplying them with a semi-automatic handgun, and was held responsible for introducing them to Maynes. Released in the fall of 2003, as *Elephant* hit the theaters, a home video of the Columbine killers shows them engaged in target practice, sampling multiple different weapons, from semi-automatic rifles to pistols. In the video, Klebold shoots from the hip with a sawed-off shotgun, aiming at a bowling pin wedged in a tree. What is striking about the video, in part, is how populated it is. Both Maynes and Duran are present, along with Maynes' girlfriend, Jessica Miklich, who also shoots several rounds. The video illustrates a disturbing aspect of Columbine—namely the presence of a circle of complicit adults, as well as the media-hungriness of the killers. Though the tape was only recently released, its existence, along with a series of "basement" videos (not yet released), suggest a certain appetite for an audience.

Van Sant's killers, by contrast, plan in a kind of vacuum. They procure their weapons from a blank source—the vast anonymous mechanism of the Internet. Though he heightens our awareness of their isolation in this way, Van Sant also lets us off the hook. How much more uncomfortable to be confronted with our communal responsibility for Columbine as we watch our fellow adults abet those killers. By that same token, how much more uncomfortable it would be to watch a film like *Elephant* if Van Sant replicated the way that the Columbine killers courted our voyeurism into their lives. Van Sant never places his killers before a home camera, preserving their motivations or manifestos for posterity. He does not draw attention to the questions of their desire to make a statement, to be known to us. He sidesteps the moral tension inherent in both his decision to make the film and our decision to view it. Though the stated objective is to simply document the day, it would seem that even this is missing much of its psychic load; we are relieved of our complicity, and Van Sant of his. The result is an insufficiently nuanced document of that fateful day, underscored by the strange familiarity of the killings themselves.

PHOTOFEST

Alex Frost as Alex.

There is a sense of anticlimax to the actual shootings that is the film's strength as a social commentary and its weakness as a narrative film. The waiting is over and the inevitable shooting takes place; students are fleeing and dying. And yet, we continue to wait—wait for it to register. We wait to feel sadder, more horrified, more unsettled. The killers themselves are not just mechanical and numb but despondent—underwhelmed by the enormity of their own actions. And in this moment of viewing, so are we.

Or are we? If we were truly insensitive to terrible events like the Columbine shootings, we would not continue to pry at their mystery. The natural comparison that we reach for in considering *Elephant* is to Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine*. Given the nature of his topic and the compellingly untidy and polemical bent of Moore's style, *Bowling for Columbine* ignited passionate discussion from the very instant viewers stepped, bleary-eyed, back out into theater lobbies. While many may take issue with Moore's theories or filmmaking methods, he can hardly be accused of shying away from his material, and the dialogues that emerged in response to his film suggest that audiences want and need to grapple with it as well. Whether taken up as a documentary or narrative film subject, Columbine is a high-stakes proposition. Viewers are highly attuned to nuances of portrayal—especially choices of inclusion and omission with regard to portrayal of the killers themselves—because we continue to refine our collective notion of how our society generates this alarming new variety of menace. By trying to set aside the burden of interpretation, Van Sant may not be giving us quite enough material to work with, with the result that the power of his film ebbs along with its refusal to proffer neither the bracing effects of an unexpected turn nor the comfort of traditional closure.

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Abstract *Elephant* chronicles the day of a high school massacre similar to that which occurred at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999. Visually rich and insightful about adolescent life, the film ultimately may not give viewers enough to work with in grappling with the terrible phenomenon it takes for material.

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Pontecorvo directs *Battle of Algiers,* which he revisits in his new documentary.

Gillo Pontecorvo's Return to Algiers

Director: Gillo Pontecorvo. Mixer Documenti, RAI 2 Television. Orme s.r.l.

Since the attacks of 9/11 there has been increased interest in the films of Gillo Pontecorvo. *Battle of Algiers* (1965) received a limited re-release in major cities in late 2003 and has reportedly been screened at the Pentagon as a source document for anti-insurgency planning in Afghanistan and Iraq. Pontecorvo made *Battle of Algiers* in a style that recalls the heroic period of Italian neorealism. He cast non-professional actors and shot on location with grainy film stock: the recreation of events was so gripping that the film had to be advertised as not containing any actual historical footage of the Algerian uprising against French colonial rule. In 1992 Pontecorvo returned to Algeria to make *Gillo Pontecorvo's Return to Algiers*, (the documentary audiences assumed he had made nearly 30 years prior). This short film is a running montage between sequences from *Battle of Algiers* intercut with footage of the elderly Pontecorvo visiting locations from the 1965 film, as well as segments of Pontecorvo in the Roman studio of the Italian state television network discussing the Algerian political situation.

In December of 1991 the theocratic FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) party earned enough votes in the first multi-party elections ever held in Algeria to force a second round of voting. The FIS victory posed a serious political and cultural challenge to the FLN (National Liberation Front), a left-leaning, pan-Arabic party in the Baathist-Nasser tradition, which governed the country under single-party rule following independence. The reaction of the FLN government to the strong showing of the FIS was to postpone a second round of elections. Pontecorvo's documentary is imbued with the awareness that the party whose victory over French colonialism he had championed in the mid-1960s had overturned a popular election.

Gillo Pontecorvo's Return to Algiers opens with 1962 documentary footage of the exodus of French colonists, followed by shots of jubilation following Algerian independence to the strains of heroic, celebratory music. The film then shifts to a presentation of Algeria on the verge of civil war after the postponed elections of 1991. Pontecorvo provides an initial explanation for the precarious situation in Algiers by returning to a terrace where he filmed a sequence for *Battle of Algiers*. In the scene from the earlier film,

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Ben M'hidi, the historical leader of the FLN, states that it may seem difficult to start a revolution but that it is even more problematic to continue one. The scene from *Battle of Algiers* prophetically concludes that the true difficulties for Algeria will begin after the French depart. After the scene from *Battle of Algiers*, Pontecorvo appears as narrator and comments on the prophetic validity of Ben M'hidi's statement by insisting that M'hidi should have added: "Above all if we are not able to follow the path of freedom and democracy." Initially, Pontecorvo's analysis seems unrealistic, even naïve, given the theocratic threat faced by the FLN regime in 1992. Then Pontecorvo offers a *realpolitik* rationalization of the repression by the Algerian government. If there is a choice between the plague (theocratic rule) and cholera (suspension of free elections), the rational choice is the latter. To support this point Pontecorvo cuts to an interview he conducted with Mohammed Boudiaf, the head of the provisional government formed after the suppression of the 1991 elections. Boudiaf, who was assassinated shortly after the making of *Gillo Pontecorvo's Return to Algeria*, confirms Pontecorvo's analysis by stating that any semblance of democratic institutions in Algeria would not have survived an electoral victory for the theocratic FIS.

Pontecorvo's documentary then presents segments of the successes of the FLN-led Algerian government since independence. These include the development of a compulsory education system within ten years of independence, the establishment of public universities 20 years after the departure of the French, and a foreign policy of adherence to the non-aligned movement. To his credit, Pontecorvo's commentary points out how the spirit of the independence movement gave way to one party rule and the corruption typical of authoritarian regimes. Pontecorvo also refers to Algeria's demographic explosion and the worldwide fall in oil prices as causes for the rioting that erupted in 1988. After attempts to quell dissension, the FLN announced in February of 1989 that it would allow other political parties and free elections, a statement that Pontecorvo comments was not entirely believed by the general populace. However, rather than the development of political parties in a manner that a Westerner like Pontecorvo might expect, the FLN's decision to allow elections led to the rise of the theocratic FIS.

Pontecorvo compares the situation in Algeria to that of the Eastern Bloc after the implosion of the Soviet Union—an analysis to be expected since the documentary was made shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, the question of what happened in Algeria after independence is answered more effectively by the images in Pontecorvo's documentary than by his commentary. For example, Pontecorvo's film crew visits the prison from the opening scenes of *Battle of Algiers* in which a man being dragged to the guillotine incites the passions of his fellow prisoners by yelling "Long Live Algeria." The scene climaxes with a zoom-in on the angry eyes of the film's protagonist, Ali Le Point, from the barred window of his cell, accompanied by the sound of the guillotine falling on the condemned man's neck. Pontecorvo reports that when he filmed the guillotine scene the prison was empty after the French had abandoned the country. With the country on the brink of civil war in 1992, the prison holds approximately 5000 political prisoners, and Pontecorvo admits that his crew was not allowed to film inside the prison this time.

In another segment Pontecorvo presents footage of the bodies of eight Algerian policemen whose station was attacked by FIS terrorists. The scene has a chilling relevance for current events in Iraq, and recalls a sequence from *Battle of Algiers* in which FLN commandos break into a French colonial police station and commit a similar massacre. However, Pontecorvo does not play the scene from *Battle of Algiers* in the documentary, perhaps because of the parallel between the methods of the FIS and those of the FLN nearly 30 years prior. Instead, Pontecorvo visits the old French Quarter and replays scenes from *Battle of Algiers* that recreate FLN attacks against the French *pied-noir* (black foot) colonists. Pontecorvo appears on camera to report that the old French quarter has become the stronghold of the FIS, whose supporters spit at Pontecorvo and threaten him and his crew.

Pontecorvo also visits one of the public universities whose existence he claims as one of the great achievements of the FLN. Pontecorvo relates how when making *Battle of Algiers* he came to the university to recruit extras as French paratroopers, looking in particular for members of the Kabili ethnic minority. But in 1992, a particularly strident pro-theocratic student warns other students not to talk about Algeria's problems in front of a foreigner. The student's words are translated into Italian as, "Dirty linen must not be washed in public." There is a heavy irony in the use of such as proverb for Pontecorvo, whose film style grew out of the Italian neorealist tradition: Christian Democrat minister Giulio Andreotti used the same proverb to explain the denial of government subvention for Vittorio De Sica's neorealist masterpiece *Ladri di biciclette/The Bicycle Thief* (1948).

Pontecorvo explains the hatred of the Western media that he encountered in Algeria and the level of

intolerance evident in theocratic culture by citing how in centuries past Islam allowed a certain level of religious plurality. However, once more the images that Pontecorvo shows of Algeria are more convincing than his commentary. A sequence introduces the theme of religious influence on young Algerians whose main form of education consists of rote memorization of the Koran in crowded rooms. Pontecorvo displays extended shots of innocents memorizing verses, followed by pans of the turrets of mosques and a montage of the hardened faces of adult men. Pontecorvo insists that it is dangerous to reduce Islam to terrorism, backwardness, and intolerance. Echoing Edward Said, he explains the violent reactions of the pro-theocratic followers in Algeria as a residual of colonialism. He supports this point with interviews of Western-dressed Algerian women who criticize punishments like dismemberment or lapidation in Islamic legal codes. However, when Pontecorvo asks the same women about the 1991 Gulf War, a recent event at the time the documentary was shot, they affirm their support for Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein out of a sense of pan-Arabic solidarity. They reveal that the Gulf War actually brought many university-educated women to the point of wearing the veil as a symbol of anti-Western resistance.

Pontecorvo makes the revelatory statement that what ultimately separates the West from the Islamic world is Western inability to understand Islamic insistence on male/female segregation. He explains that in Algeria women who seek equal rights are led by a small group of activists under constant threat from theocratic guerillas. Yet Pontecorvo also interviews veiled Algerian high school girls who tell him they hope co-educational classrooms will be abolished. When Pontecorvo asks for an explanation from Western-dressed Algerian women, he is told that many Algerian women prefer to live according to the laws and customs of traditional society. Pontecorvo's documentary effectively cuts these interviews, mostly done in interior settings where the women felt comfortable enough to voice their opinions, with statements from men on the street who support the FIS because they claim it represents the views of most Algerians. Pontecorvo discovers that many Algerian women accept their social situation because of the existence of a female zone in Algerian society with separate social activities, which are depicted in Pontecorvo's film. To further explore the separate female sphere in Algerian society, Pontecorvo's film crew stages a daytime visit to one of the large courtyards of the Casbah in Algiers intercut with images of the same locations from *Battle of Algiers*. In the days of anti-French resistance the Casbah was a nucleus of the FLN independence movement. In 1992 Pontecorvo reports that the Casbah has become an FIS stronghold. When Pontecorvo asks women in the Casbah if they accept their place in Algerian society, he receives the same hostile treatment he experienced at the university and in the old French quarter. Word spreads of his presence in the Casbah, and his film crew beats a hasty retreat to the safety of their van.

Pontecorvo explains how the Franco-Algerian conflict was initially a conflict between uniformed French conscripts and rurally based FLN guerillas that escalated after pro-colonial paramilitary groups such as the pro-French colonial OAS (Secret Army Organization) planted bombs in the Casbah. The documentary cuts to a scene from *Battle of Algiers* that shows the aftermath of a bomb blast in the Casbah with sacred music accompanying shots of the body of a dead child being carried from the rubble. Pontecorvo follows this scene of a French atrocity with another sequence from *Battle of Algiers* depicting an FLN atrocity in which an Algerian woman dressed in Western garb plants a bomb among dancing teenagers at a bar in the French quarter. Pontecorvo's strength as a feature-film director was his ability to reprise the Italian neorealist style of objective depiction of all sides of an issue, with an emphasis on the suffering of innocents. Like the Italian neorealist generation, Pontecorvo's cinematic and political culture was founded in his experience as a leader in the anti-Nazi/anti-Fascist resistance in World War II. Pontecorvo actually began his film career as an actor in Aldo Vergano's neorealist resistance drama *Outcry* (1946).

Pontecorvo only completed four feature films besides *Battle of Algiers*. *The Wide Blue Road* (1957) is a pink-neorealist film starring Yves Montand (re-released in 1999). The Oscar-nominated *Kapò* (1959), starring Susan Strasberg, is one of the few Italian films to approach the subject of the Holocaust in the early post-war period. *Queimada/Burn!* (1969), starring Marlon Brando, is an undervalued allegory on the progression from colonial to multinational corporate control of the third world. Pontecorvo distanced himself from the idea of political violence in his last feature *Ogro* (1979), a film about an ETA assassination of Francoist minister Carrero Blanco starring Gian Maria Volonté. The film was in production in 1978 in Italy when the Red Brigade kidnapping-murder of former Italian premier and Christian Democratic Party chair Aldo Moro shook Italian society. Pontecorvo later commented that *Ogro* was made with a guilty conscience, and his previous interest in depicting armed struggled

seemed inappropriate given events in Italy.[1] This attitude is evident in the epilogue to *Ogro*, in which the ETA terrorists visit the deathbed of their most hardline comrade. But instead of reaffirming the political convictions that led to the Blanco assassination, the ETA group in effect renounces violence in favor of the possibility of seeking change within democratic institutions. The realization that Italy was facing an explosion of terrorism in the 1970s seems to have provoked a change in Pontecorvo's political compass. But such an independent assessment was not out of step with Pontecorvo's previous politics. After his leadership role in the Resistance, he had a potentially bright political future in the PCI (Italian Communist Party). However, he ended his formal affiliation with the PCI after the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary in 1956, adding his voice to those critical of the pro-Soviet line within the Italian communist party. His latest political moves have been to identify himself with the international no-global and pacifist movements.

Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* has gained renewed relevance due to the rise of Islamic terrorism and the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the documentary *Gillo Pontecorvo's Return to Algiers* offers an emphatic epilogue to Pontecorvo's sporadic career as a director. It should be seen by anyone attempting to find parallels between the current situation in occupied Iraq and Pontecorvo's dramatization of Algerian independence in *Battle of Algiers*. To see the elderly Pontecorvo conducting interviews in an Algeria on the brink of de facto civil war in 1992 is to realize how complicated political issues have become since Pontecorvo's foundational experiences in the clear-cut, good versus evil struggle against Fascism in the Italian resistance.

Carlo Celli is Associate Professor at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. He is the author of *The Divine Comic: The Cinema of Roberto Benigni* (2001) and *Gillo Pontecorvo: From Resistance to Terrorism,* scheduled for release by Scarecrow Press in 2005.

Notes

1. Irene Bignardi, *Memorie estorte a uno smemorato* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1999), 173-176.

Abstract Gillo Pontecorvo made *The Battle of Algiers* (1965), a documentary about Algeria on the brink of civil war. In *Gillo Pontecorvo's Return to Algiers*, the elderly Pontecorvo conducts interviews and comments on the changes to Algeria in a manner that provides an epilogue to his sporadic career.

Book Reviews

Animation and America

By Paul Wells. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002. $21.95.

Together with jazz, the Broadway musical, and the Western, Paul Wells claims the animated cartoon as one of four indigenous American art forms. As *Animation and America*'s title suggests, he is interested in the ways in which national and cultural context are reimagined: "[I]n enunciating itself, Animation enunciates America: history, mythology, freedom" (17). Author of *Understanding Animation* (Routledge, 1998), and *Animation: Genre and Authorship* (Wallflower, 2002), Paul Wells now adds a third contribution to the ever-expanding field of animation studies, and one which, in many ways, is a continuation and partial repetition of both his earlier works (*Animation: Genre and Authorship* is a clearer articulation of some of the same ideas for the undergraduate film student). Urging the centrality of movement to the language of animation, his introduction also claims an *essential* radicalism in the epistemological nature of animation, which by its very nature abstracts reality. He goes on to suggest that even in its most popular form, the history of the animated cartoon in the United States has been a social history of modernity. In this, Wells also sees animation's *difference* and *otherness* as expressive of America's cultural contradictions and anxieties.

While he acknowledges historian Donald Crafton's studies of early animation's populist roots in vaudeville and the comic strip, Wells also argues for animation's additional location in modernist practices and in some philosophic dimensions of the avant-garde that, because of animation's historical marginalization in both the industry and film studies, has meant that this modernist radicality has gone unnoticed. Another recent excellent text in animation studies, Esther Leslie's *Hollywood Flatlands; Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant-garde* (Verso, 2002), also takes up this relationship between animation and modernity. Wells' first chapter is an extended discussion of the ways in which in the pre-Disney era animation pioneers like Otto Messmer (Felix the Cat), Winsor McCay (Gertie, Little Nemo), and J. Stuart Blackton were the "children of the Modernist project," in that their work explored the limits of graphic pictorialism and narrative orthodoxy. Similarly, he claims metamorphosis, one of the staples of animation vocabulary, to be analogous to the literary stream of consciousness techniques of modernist writers Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Reworking historian Tom Gunning's well-known theory of the "cinema of attractions," Wells coins "cartoonal attractions" to describe animation that foregrounds the graphic, non-linear specificities of the medium.

Recognizing the ways that the industrial conditions of production effaced individual animators beneath the sign of "Disney," Wells argues that Disney's shadow has had a near absolute "branding" effect that has obscured the important auteurist contributions of early animation. Indeed, a key chapter, "The Disney Effect," reads the studio as central to the postwar emergence of American culture, whilst careful not to claim that the studio was the vanguard of modernist aesthetics. Like other critics, he agrees that Disney's output was a form of sentimental or "moderate" Modernism, an "effective mix of nostalgia and progress; backward-looking feelings attached to forward-looking forms"(48), whose increasingly industrialized organization was an ironic counterpoint to the folk sensibility and rural nostalgia of its narrative content. Instead Wells locates the key modernist ethos to be situated in Disney's organizational, technological, and entrepreneurial innovations, which were in certain ways more important than its aesthetic achievements, and which enabled its dominance up until 1941. Indeed, he reads the entire history of American animation after 1941 as a history of reactions and responses to the ways in which *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* limited animation's possibilities to the realm of narrative realism. Further, the dominance of the Disney brand enabled its competitors, the Fleischer Brothers, Warner Bros, MGM, and UPA, to differentiate their product through subversive techniques like caricature, irony, and satire. Then, in "New Disney, Old Stories," Wells traces the post-Walt era through to *Toy Story*, marking the renaissance of the studio (and the industry, by extension) in the contributions of three key men: John Lasseter, the founder of PIXAR and the director of the first CGI animated feature, and the team of Ron Clements and Ron Musker (*The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin*, *Hercules*). In the musical utopias of both classical and modern Disney, he identifies romantic yearning and the "maturation" story (from Bambi to Ariel) as the key to audience identification, and that which subsumes the historical into the personal meta-narrative.

Arguing against Henri Giroux's reading of Disney as "profoundly pedagogical in its attempt to produce specific knowledges, values and desires" (112), Wells calls for a greater attention to the complexity of animation's form over Giroux's focus on ideology—which at times is reminiscent of the formalist wars in cinema studies. In usefully trying to account for Disney's enormous populist success through a greater attention to reception, (as against the dominant academic critique of Disney's ideological conservatism), he locates a primary spectatorial identification with the aspirations and struggles of protagonists like Belle or Ariel. Disney's identificatory strategy privileges emotion, agency, and the personal over the socio-cultural and political ideas that would be more evident in "cartoonal" animation (and which in its insular focus on the individual and the psycho-therapeutic is distinctively American). However, the assumption that this emotional identification is necessarily evacuated of ideology is troubling. Wells' final and strongest chapter "United States of the Art," is a nuanced reading of *Toy Story's* Woody and Buzz, which, drawing upon developmental psychology, shows the ways in which the parallel interactive relationships between children and their toys, spectators and characters, mediate the transition from "a culture of the camera"

Film Quarterly, Vol. 58, Issue 2, pages 53-66. ISSN 0015-1386, electronic ISSN 1533-8630. © 2005 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, at www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm.

to the digital and consumerist era. More disappointing is that Wells seems to subscribe to the very humanist project that Disney films so skillfully articulate: in *Toy Story* is a modernism (as he acknowledges) not of shock or disorientation but of a "meditation of what it is to love, what is fundamentally human and what intrinsic values underpin our mortality." Even more surprisingly, Wells points to the metaphysical here: "a return to spirituality that underpins radical modernism in the cartoonal and avant-garde forms" (165).

Although Wells' book is not a standard chronological history of animation, its scope is nonetheless stimulating in its breadth. In addition to the three chapters which focus on Disney, other chapters examine UPA, Warner Bros, and more briefly the Fleischer Brothers, as examples of a subversive "synaesthetic" tradition, a rather wooly term he borrows from Gene Youngblood, and which, like the humanist orientation that lurks in his work, also suggests metaphysical principles at work. He also examines the television era demonstrating the close relationship of the limited animation of Hanna Barbera (Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear, and The Flintstones) to the genres of television sitcom and radio comedy, which foregrounded verbal comedy and the primacy of the voice over the earlier focus on motion in the full animation of the theatrical era. Turning to recent animation, from *The Simpsons* to *Ren and Stimpy* on television and from Joe Dante's *Toy Soldiers* (1998) to Bill Plympton's work in shorts and features, he also identifies satiric, critical, and subversive traditions that are "cartoonal" in their articulation of otherness and difference.

Wells' prose here suffers from a certain opacity not evident in his other work, and is further weakened by his use of awkward formulations derived from David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*. Riesman's sociological classic was quite a hit when it was published in 1950: it divided human behavior into three categories: "tradition-directed," the oppositional "inner-directed," and the conformist "outer-directed," Wells rather misleadingly defines the latter as "those which seek new models" and together with inner-directed, links them as oppositional tendencies in animation (against the "tradition-directed" Disney). However, the two terms rapidly become interchangeable in his usage. This tripartite distinction seems to echo Wells' earlier formulation of conventional, developmental, and experimental categories of animation, which would have been preferable here. What is interesting is Wells' use of psychoanalytic ideas of sublimation, projection, and distanciation, in contrast to more common critical readings of Disney animation as fantasy or escapism, and which he more extensively defines in his 1998 work, along with synecdoche, metaphor, and condensation. I would have liked to see more on the Fleischer Brothers studio, the creators of Betty Boop and Popeye, which Wells acknowledges had a near-parallel, if not earlier, history to Disney in technological innovations (the Rotoscope, the bouncing ball, mixed animation and live action, and the stereoscope). One small quibble is that the filmography in the appendix does not list directors with the film titles, thereby decreasing its usefulness. A dense philosophical reading, Wells' style and clarity are at times hampered by his abbreviated references to modernity and auteurism which are more fully developed in his other works, and which would prove more accessible for the general animation reader. Finally, at the margins of his narrative there lurk humanist ideals, metaphysical assumptions, and behavioral psychology that beg for critical deconstruction—and which hamper what is otherwise a wide-ranging and provocative examination of the ways in which American animation "embodies and reflects the psychological, emotional and material conditions of contemporary American life" (155).

Dr. Kirsten Moana Thompson is Assistant Professor of Film Studies in the Department of English at Wayne State University.

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Hide in Plain Sight

The Hollywood Blacklistees in Film and Television, 1950-2002

By Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner. New York: Palgrave, 2003. $27.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

In the afterword to *The Inquisition in Hollywood* (University of California Press, 1983), Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund lament the absence of critical work on the relationship during the Cold War between Hollywood films and American politics. After acknowledging the weakness of their own work in this area, Ceplair and Englund write, "There have been instances of intelligent commentary on individual movies, but no systematic, persuasive analysis." Although a long time in coming, a spate of recent works on the Hollywood blacklist attempts to fill the gap described by Ceplair and Englund. These include Thomas Doherty's *Cold War, Cool Medium*, Peter Biskind's recently reissued *Seeing Is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties*, and several works by historians Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner. Indeed, Buhle and Wagner's *Hide in Plain Sight* might be viewed as the final work in a quadrilogy on the Hollywood blacklist that includes a critical biography of director Abraham Polonsky (*A Very Dangerous Citizen*), an encyclopedic collection of capsule reviews for films made by HUAC witnesses (*Blacklisted*), and a companion volume of film criticism that deals with films made by left-wing artists during the 1930s and 1940s (*Radical Hollywood*). Taken together, Buhle and Wagner's output is a monumental achievement that covers some 50 years of American film history, and attempts to analyze the blacklist along various aesthetic, industrial, political, and cultural axes. Yet despite the admirable breadth and scope of Buhle and Wagner's work taken in its totality, it is not without its methodological and conceptual flaws. *Hide in Plain Sight*, the most recent entry in this series, is no exception.

The book is organized topically around several different themes. Individual chapters deal with the black market

to the digital and consumerist era. More disappointing is that Wells seems to subscribe to the very humanist project that Disney films so skillfully articulate: in *Toy Story* is a modernism (as he acknowledges) not of shock or disorientation but of a "meditation of what it is to love, what is fundamentally human and what intrinsic values underpin our mortality." Even more surprisingly, Wells points to the metaphysical here: "a return to spirituality that underpins radical modernism in the cartoonal and avant-garde forms" (165).

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The book is organized topically around several different themes. Individual chapters deal with the black market

contributions of blacklistees, both in film and on television; the possibilities of political critique from within culturally marginalized genres such as the B-film and the children's film; the incorporation of neorealist principles in politically progressive films of the fifties and sixties; and the continuation of progressive themes in the films of blacklisted writers and directors made after the dissolution of the blacklist. The book's final two chapters provide detailed career overviews of particularly notable left-wing film artists, namely directors Martin Ritt and Joseph Losey, playwright Lillian Hellman, and screenwriter Waldo Salt. Throughout the book, Buhle and Wagner's historical narrative interweaves several different types of material, including the personal histories of HUAC witnesses, broad summaries of the political and industrial contexts for Hollywood films, and brief plot summaries and critiques of dozens of different films and television programs. Aimed at a general audience, Buhle and Wagner's prose is lucid and readable, studded with quotes and anecdotes from a "who's who" of Hollywood's progressive community. To their credit, much of this material comes from first-hand sources, gleaned either from various memoirs of HUAC witnesses or from hours of interviews conducted with blacklisted writers, stars, and directors.

If Buhle and Wagner's book advances a central argument, it is one that seems to be implicitly directed at *The Inquisition in Hollywood*.[1] In that book, Ceplair and Englund offered an explicit defense of Hollywood's left-wing screenwriting community by arguing that studio protocols, multiple authorship of scripts, external censorship, and the hierarchical nature of studio production made it virtually impossible for screenwriters to sneak subversive material into Hollywood films. Countering that claim, Buhle and Wagner argue that Hollywood's left-wing artists had a strong and decisive influence on the films of the fifties and sixties, whether it was expressed in the bitter disaffection of film noir, in the utopian aspirations of the social problem film, or in the broader representational strategies used to articulate issues of race, gender, and class.

Yet, if this is Buhle and Wagner's central aim, then it would seem that their main argument is marred by two critical lacunae. First of all, the authors implicitly set up Ceplair and Englund's work as a "straw man." Indeed, a more generous assessment of their (Ceplair and Englund) argument is that it is only concerned with specifically Communist themes rather than with social themes in toto. Viewed this way, there is no inherent contradiction between the political situations described by Ceplair and Englund, on the one hand, and Buhle and Wagner, on the other. While Hollywood's mode of production provided important checks on the inclusion of Communist material, this does not mean that left-wing artists were precluded from dealing with other issues, many of which were broadly liberal or even progressive in their political orientation. Secondly, it suggests that Buhle and Wagner's critical method is largely tautological. While Buhle and Wagner acknowledge the constraints of Hollywood's mode of production, it is hardly surprising for them to conclude that a community engaged in Popular Front political activities would produce work that, relatively speaking, is more progressive and liberal on social issues than those films made by centrists or conservatives.

Beyond these broad conceptual problems, *Hide in Plain Sight* is additionally marred by several smaller methodological flaws:

1) Factual errors. On page 190, for example, Buhle and Wagner claim that Martin Ritt's *Hud* lost the 1963 Oscar for Best Picture to *How the West Was Won*. In fact, both films lost that year to *Tom Jones*. Such a mistake would seem forgivable if it were not for the fact that Buhle and Wagner want to draw a political inference from the alleged "victory" of *How the West Was One*. For them, it is proof of Hollywood's conservatism that Ritt's liberal neo-Western lost to a much more old-fashioned example of the genre, a claim that seems nonsensical if both films lost out to a very British literary adaptation.

2) Poor secondary research. While one hardly expects that popular histories maintain the level of scholarship associated with academic works, there are several curious omissions on the part of Buhle and Wagner. For example, their introductory reading of *The Planet of the Apes* (1968) as blacklist allegory completely ignores Eric Greene's groundbreaking work in his 1996 book *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, in which he presents the film as an allegory of the Civil Rights era. This omission points up the limited nature of Buhle and Wagner's reading, which overemphasizes the contributions of Michael Wilson at the expense of Rod Serling, and highlights the film's themes of anti-Semitism while excluding its treatment of racism directed at African-Americans. More importantly, it also suggests the extent to which the authors skew their interpretive frameworks toward the larger arguments advanced in the book.

3) Loosely defined concepts. In chapters on blacklistees' involvement in American versions of neorealism and art cinema, Buhle and Wagner rely on tacit definitions of both concepts, a gesture that leads to the inclusion of some rather curious examples to support their case. Here again, since neither author is a film scholar per se, it is hardly surprising that their secondary research neglects pathbreaking work by a host of important scholars. Yet, since Buhle and Wagner include films like *Viva Zapata* (1951), *The Last Sunset* (1961), and the Spaghetti Western cycle in their chapter on neorealist influence, it begs the question of what their working definition of this critical construct is.

4) Simplistic readings of films. As historians, Buhle and Wagner seem unaware of the critical methodologies that have dominated film studies for the past 30 years. Textual analysis, ideological critique, cultural studies approaches, and reception studies seem to have completely passed them by. Instead, they employ a reductive, reflectionist approach that first offers a brief plot synopsis of each film, and then discusses the extent to which it advances either film aesthetics or the larger sociological and political themes of the era.

In sum, *Hide in Plain Sight* is an excellent introduction to the work of several blacklisted writers and directors, such as Martin Ritt, Joseph Losey, Waldo Salt, Walter Bernstein,

Michael Wilson, Carl Foreman, Abraham Polonsky, and Dalton Trumbo. Indeed, even a reader well-schooled in blacklist literature will learn a lot from *Hide in Plain Sight*, much of it culled from the hours and hours of oral history collected by Buhle and Wagner. That said, because of a myriad of conceptual and methodological problems, the book still leaves something to be desired. That mythical beast—a rigorous and systematic work of blacklist film criticism—is yet to be written.

Jeff Smith is an associate professor and Director of the Program in Film and Media Studies at Washington University in St. Louis.

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Note

1. I am indebted to Elizabeth Helfgott for this observation. Her capsule review of Buhle and Wagner's book notes that the authors challenge the "nearly universally accepted view that showbiz political radicals could not possibly been injecting communist propaganda into American entertainment." See Helfgott's "Back in Black," *Film Comment* 40: 1 (January/February 2004): 77.

Making Pictures

A Century of European Cinematography

IMAGO: The Federation of European Cinematographers. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003. $65.00.

At a seminar on the crucial role of cinematography in the narrative and aesthetic cinematic process held at the School of Visual Arts, esteemed director of photography Gordon Willis asked the audience of film students for questions. "What raw stock did you use on *Annie Hall*?" "What F-Stop did you shoot at for the Don's office in *The Godfather*?" As these queries droned on, Willis dutifully answered in one or two words—mostly numbers related to film inventory and math. Later, during a daylong interview with Willis for my book *Principal Photography: Interviews with Feature Film Cinematographers*, he was relieved to discuss the "why" more than the "how"—form as well as content.

Cinematography is both an art and a craft. Currently there are excellent volumes on the technical operation of the camera: *Cinematography*, by Kris Malkiewicz and *Cinematography Theory and Practice: Image Making for Cinematographers, Directors, and Videographers*, by Blain Brown. Renowned cinematographers have written insightful memoirs: *A Man With A Camera*, by Nestor Almendros, *Seventy Light Years*: *A Life in the Movies*, by Freddie Young, *Magic Hour: The Life of a Cameraman*, by Jack Cardiff, and John Alton's *Painting with Light*, in which the master of film noir photography reveals the technique behind his artistry. Collections of interviews, *Behind the Camera*, by Leonard Maltin, and *Masters of Light: Conversations with Contemporary Cinematographers*, by Dennis Schaefer and Larry Salvato, are invaluable oral histories.

Making Pictures locates a balance between illuminating the storytelling and aesthetic aspects of cinematography and revealing the scientific, alchemical, mathematic, and optic properties that converge to express the director's visual conception. As if this weren't a difficult enough task, this handsome large-format volume from IMAGO, an organization comprised of over 23 honorary associations, is dedicated to highlighting the history and achievements of European cinema.

American cinematographers and the visual dynamism of American filmmaking have received substantial recognition in print and in the documentary *Visions of Light*, which honors the achievements of photography in U.S. cinema. This domination of attention has been roundly criticized by the European film community. Thankfully, *Making Pictures* is a giant step toward acknowledging an international cinema that bears its own character and has been a major influence on American moviemaking.

Making Pictures is organized to cover many forgotten and ignored aspects of European cinematography. An introductory section includes essays placing the European cinematographer at the center of the filmmaking process. Jack Cardiff writes on the special rapport between the cameraman and the director, stressing how the expressed dramatic atmosphere is realized through photography. The cameraman is portrayed as a partner, a problem solver, and a diplomat, negotiating between the person at the helm, the crew, and the actors. Sven Nykvist defines the job of director of photography (abbreviated as the more respectful DoP throughout, rather than the widely used American form DP). Nykvist, who photographed many of Ingmar Bergman's finest works, writes about his process, describes the landscape of the face, and answers the essential question, "What does the director want to convey and what does the audience want to see?" Giuseppe Rotunno examines the essence of light and his collaborations with Fellini, including *Amarcord* (1973) and *And the Ship Sails On* (1983), on which he utilized "the filter of memory," the application of photographic technique to express the nostalgia of remembrance rather than the reality of the past. Bernardo Bertolucci personalizes the director/DoP relationship by revealing the intimacy of his work with Vittorio Storaro as they walk through a Francis Bacon exhibit in preparation for *Last Tango in Paris*, explore their unconscious feelings during the shooting of *1900*, and intuit a mutual understanding that "something mysterious was happening" such that magic could be captured on film during the production of *The Last Emperor*. The late Marcello Mastroianni describes the respect and love shared by actor and cinematographer, extolling the cinematographer as a protector and friend who takes the thespian outside "the circle surrounding the director, where, as Dante wrote: 'Everyone is after something, squeezing against each other, being used and eaten up.'"

Making Pictures goes on to outline a segmented history of the first century of European cinematography detailing

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Making Pictures goes on to outline a segmented history of the first century of European cinematography detailing

innovations, stylistics, creators, and landmark films. Eras dominated by particular countries, such as "Germany in the Weimar Period 1918-29" and "Eastern Europe: The Post-War Period," are given their own sections.

Much repetition about the cinematographer's role and collaboration with the director precedes a vital discussion of the film frame, composition, and the intimate relationship between cinematography and classical painting. Excellent reproductions of the works of Vermeer, Uccello, Caravaggio, and Velasquez are presented and discussed in the context of their influence on light, framing, color, and visual structure in motion pictures.

The centerpiece of *Making Pictures* is dedicated to 100 films significant to the history of European cinematography. This is not a "greatest" list, although many of the films—*The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *Earth*, *The Grand Illusion*, *Ivan the Terrible Part I*, and *Wild Strawberries*—qualify. Each film, chosen by a three-person jury, Jaromir Sofr (ACK, Czech Republic), Tony Forsberg (FSF, Sweden), and Wolfgang Fischer (BVK, Germany), is given a page-length essay that provides background and examples of innovation in visual storytelling and aesthetics, accompanied by a profile of the DoP. The main criterion behind each decision was the visual quality of the film. A jury statement and magnificent frame enlargements support and illustrate the text.

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It is the rare gems that empower *Making Pictures* in its mission to right the wrongs in overlooked European works. *Der Student von Prag* (*The Student of Prague*), directed by Stellan Rye and photographed by Guido Seeber, is considered a landmark of expressionist cinema by the jury.

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Unfortunately, the final section of *Moving Pictures*, "Tools of the Trade," introduces a commercial participation. The book was sponsored by a series of industry concerns. Thankfully, however, the text in the previous chapters shows no sign of corruption by corporate influence. The sections on Camera, Systems, Film, Laboratories and Post-production, Lighting and Filters, Studios, System Rental and Technical Festivals contain historical information connecting the tools to the development of cinematographic stylistics, even as some read like sophisticated brochures.

The writing throughout *Making Pictures* is intelligent, the layout is meticulous and exquisite, and the quality of the copious photographs matches the high standards of the creators it represents. The back matter is extremely useful. It offers a select bibliography, a list of useful websites, a specialized glossary, and four ways of looking up information: a general index, a film title index, an index of cinematographers, and a directors' index.

With *Making Pictures*, IMAGO has managed to sustain a respect for the auteur while revealing the indelible contribution made through cinematography. This undertaking acknowledges those allies in art who are willing to lend their talents to a singular vision for a motion picture that speaks with a unified voice through the honored tradition of visual storytelling.

Vincent LoBrutto is an instructor of editing, production design, and cinema studies in the Department of Film, Video, and Animation at the School of Visual Arts, New York.

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The New Biographical Dictionary of Film

By David Thomson. Fourth Edition. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. $35.00 cloth; $22.95 paper.

It's not often that you see an encyclopedia with attitude, whose author wants to be "your needling, provocative, argumentative companion at the movies." That's both the charm and the frustration of David Thomson's book. According to the jacket blurbs, reviewers of previous editions wildly appreciated his acerbity. And, yes, you can dip into it when you have a spare moment, whether to reassure yourself about your preferences or to compliment yourself on a superior view. Thomson is a sharp critic in several senses of the word.

This new edition, the fourth, is indeed enhanced: the previous 834 pages have grown to 963, a 15% increase. Entries have been updated, and many added—mostly actors and directors, both newly prominent talents and previously ignored oldtimers. Further, in an interesting departure, there appear a number of professionals not usually mentioned by film dictionaries—even critics and theorists. From a purely factual point of view, the list is judicious and useful as a

innovations, stylistics, creators, and landmark films. Eras dominated by particular countries, such as "Germany in the Weimar Period 1918-29" and "Eastern Europe: The Post-War Period," are given their own sections.

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mirror of the current state of cinema, especially its Hollywood province.

Despite its Hollywood leanings, more foreigners are included. Those from the United Kingdom and France are not surprising, but there are also articles about people like Abbas Kiarostami. The only criticism here is an inconsistency about when and when not to translate titles. For instance, Greek titles are translated, but not Swedish or Italian.

Thomson's opinions are interesting and, even when wrong-headed, worth arguing about. He's better on directors and other offscreen types than on actors. That's understandable: actors, whose vital participation in the cinematic object is so strangely neglected by film scholarship, raise difficult theoretical issues and are usually left to the ephemeral effusions of newspaper and magazine reviews. The central problem, especially for the serious study of Hollywood films, is how to distinguish the biographical human being from the screen persona—that composite of traits typifying an actor over her career, often codified by studio publicity machinery (even by indirection: "Julia Roberts as you've never seen her!").

Boldly plunging into terrain that academics fear to tread, Thomson engages actorship head on. I wish I could say that the resultant biographies were uniformly edifying. Too often I find myself bewildered by his accounts. The strict facts—date of birth, education, list of films—I can take on faith, and they're useful enough to justify owning the book. But for many Hollywood actors, one wonders when Thomson is talking about (for example) the real Ava Gardner (née Lucy Johnson, born Grabton, North Carolina, in 1922) or that fiction of "exceptional Spanish beauty" known to throw her head back for "artistic still photographs." Her "vivid looks" speak for themselves, but what to make of Thomson's attempt to find "character and intelligence behind them"? Is he asking whether Lucy was an intelligent person or not? An intelligent actor or not? Whether the characters she played were intelligent or not? Whether she was able to play an intelligent character or not? In short, is he talking about the performer or about the "Hemingway woman" of *Kilimanjaro* or *The Sun Also Rises?*

Distinguishing these personae is not a trivial theoretical matter. The most sophisticated cinephile must acknowledge that certain images and not others form in her mind as she anticipates the newest Jack Nicholson vehicle or contemplates revisiting the oldest Gary Cooper film. Hopefully, it is in this spirit that Thomson finds in Burt Reynolds' interviews evidence of greater intelligence than his usual screen character suggests. (We Californians pray that the same is true of Arnold Schwarzenegger.) But it's easy to lose one's moorings when Thomson doesn't make the distinction clear. Nor is he averse to gossip, the relevance of which is not always clear. He tells us, if we didn't know and somehow needed to, that Reynolds wears a toupee and that he has posed nude for *Cosmopolitan*.

The problem is exacerbated in the longer biographies of the most important stars: for instance, Bogart. Thomson's aperçus tantalize and perplex. He starts with a keen analysis of the Bogie cult—its impact on young European and American intellectuals of the sixties. The relation between an actor's predominant image on the screen and the public's conceptualization of it is, of course, an important concern. Thomson writes,:"'Bogie,' sighs Belmondo at the beginning of *Breathless*, and the link was made between the Bogart of the 1940s and the anarchist, behaviorist hero of the 1960s." Through the "sardonic pessimism . . . neutrality, and unfailing honor" of this image, young people were emboldened to confront the nasty realities of the world, including "presidential assassination, cold war, international conspiracy, man-made pollution, the remorseless spread of corruption." But, we are brusquely warned, this "is nonsense." Why? Because such a response would be "only possible if Bogart took something like the same view of his work in the cinema"? That seems an incomprehensible segue. Am I being told that a constructed artifact—a popular myth generated by the performance of an actor playing a certain kind of role in certain movies—is challenged, even discredited, by the knowledge that he really didn't believe the public myth? In other words, that the mythical "Bogart" is somehow invalidated because the real Bogart couldn't or wouldn't concur? And that this is justification for a "reappraisal?" But what would we be reappraising? Bogart's professional skill as an actor? His failure—as a person—to live up to what people saw as his persona's "greatness"? His refusal to play the "Bogie" game? As if to seal my mystification, Thomson concludes, "While Bogart is often very close to the illusory heart of movies, by the highest standards—Grant, Stewart, Mitchum—he is a limited actor, not quite honest enough with himself." "Honest" in what sense? Whose self? On the ropes, I plead, "Will the real Bogart please stand up?"

Or please tell me what to make of this sentence about Gary Cooper: "It is only in retrospect that one recognizes the astonishing integrity of Cooper's work: he never played a malicious or dishonest man." Is the absence of the *persona*'s malice a mark of the *actor*'s "integrity" (instead of, say, a mark of his professional limitations)? Would anybody use such reasoning when talking about Laurence Olivier?

Fortunately, Thomson's biographies of directors spare us this discomfort simply because they do not entail the problem of multiple personalities. Take his account of Robert Altman, for example. He has wisely revised his opinion of this director. At first viewing, *Nashville* put him to sleep, but now he finds Altman a "rarity in American cinema: a problem director, a true object of controversy, and a man whose films alter or shift at different viewings like shot silk." That, apparently, is a good thing (some might even call it "richness of vision"). And he goes on to a persuasive summary of Altman's talent: that the director's ability to invoke "the feeling of real time and space stretching to contain the actions of so many people, without moralizing, is both beautiful and demanding." The chronological account of the films separates the good from the so-so from the truly bad, and judiciously gives Altman his due—that "no one else alive is as capable of a dud, or a masterpiece."

A final detail about the book, namely its redundancy. It would be unfair to fault Thomson for drawbacks which are perhaps endemic to the genre. In the traditional view, an en-

cyclopedia must include vast quantities of exhaustive detail (*all* the films involving a listed actor, director, or whomever). Catalogues are inevitable. But given the internet, is so much cross-referencing still necessary, especially if lively commentary must dwindle to small islands in a sea of film titles? One finds oneself skipping long lists. Your eyes glaze over the repetition of "*Gone With the Wind* (39, Fleming)"—for nine actors, the director, the producer, the production designer, etc. Maybe *Gone With the Wind* is worth it, but how about those hundreds of forgettable pictures that take up comparable space? In the online age, one wonders if all that expenditure of paper pulp is quite necessary.

Still, it is hard to deny that Thomson's is a useful resource. Though there is sometimes a disconnect in his prose (especially as he leaps from judgment to judgment without offering reasons), he expresses himself well, often catching a nuance that is novel and insightful.

Seymour Chatman recently published a book on Michelangelo Antonioni under the Taschen imprint (2004). The photos (if he may say so himself) are beautiful.

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Popular Music and Film

Edited by Ian Inglis. London: Wallflower Press, 2003. $65.00 cloth; $22.00 paper.

In his introduction to the anthology *Popular Music and Film*, editor Ian Inglis rightly observes a significant lack in contemporary film theory and criticism: "[I]t is surprising that relatively little academic attention has been directed towards popular music and film, and the dynamics of the relationship that exists between them" (3). After postulating the historical affinities and various formal "correspondences" between pop music and film, he goes on to speculate, correctly I think, that the apparent reluctance to seriously investigate this area of study stems partially from academic territorialism, and partially from uncertainty about how to approach the film/pop music nexus. The relative paucity of sustained and intensive work on film and popular music after the year 2000 seems all the more disconcerting, given that (1) rock, pop, and film began cross-pollinating in the mid-1950s; (2) by the early 1970s, rock music had become a prominent signature of the New American cinema; and (3) since the mid-1980s to the present, the pop soundtrack remains one of the most commanding features of popular film.

As Inglis notes, there have been some scattered efforts over the past ten years or so to address pop/rock music and film: the anthologies *Celluloid Jukebox* (1995) and *Music and Cinema* (2000), Jeff Smith's *The Sounds of Commerce* (1998), and the works of K. J. Donnelly and Anahid Kassabian (both contributors to this volume). Yet Kassabian's excellent *Hearing Film* (2001), like *Music and Cinema*, addresses popular music as merely one component of a more general focus on contemporary film music that includes scoring. Smith's book offers a lively and detailed analysis of popular music soundtracks and scores, casting a wide net with an overall institutional emphasis on marketing. The recent collection *Soundtrack Available* (2001, edited by Pamela Robertson Wojcik and Arthur Knight), subtitled "Essays on Film and Popular Music," conceives "popular music" rather broadly, most essays dealing with classical Hollywood or international films from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. *Popular Music and Film* aims to fill this gap with a post-rock and roll scope and youth culture focus. While the anthology's bibliography furnishes a replete reference list for relevant scholarly writings, I was taken aback by the absence of Barry K. Grant's 1986 article, "The Classical Hollywood Musical and the 'Problem' of Rock and Roll" (*Journal of Popular Film and Television*), which lucidly raises many of the pertinent issues. Yet we welcome Inglis's call, embodied by this volume, for more diverse, international, and detailed scholarly work on pop music and film.

One of the anthology's main concerns is the modern pop music soundtrack, and how it has come to influence and displace the traditional film score. Often citing Smith's book and Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies* (1987) as a starting point, several essays explore the formal possibilities, but also intensified marketing effects, of the pop/rock soundtrack. The first essay by Robb Wright furnishes an overview, sketching some of the reasons for its resilient contemporary appeal. Discussing films such as *The Big Chill*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *High Fidelity*, and *Do the Right Thing*, he postulates a variety of advantages to the pop soundtrack: song associations for viewers; unique dramatic impact; nostalgic affect for period pieces and remakes; enhanced political messages. But of course, as he concedes, the pop music soundtrack is a cheap way to potentially garner more profit. His conclusion about the success of a given soundtrack being bound up with the viewer's quest for hipness (the enigmatic "H-factor" in his essay's title) seems rather tenuous. Acknowledging that hipness is "extremely subjective" and a "moving target," he nevertheless goes on in the following murky vein: "For each of us then, our idea of hipness in music arises in part from the success of a given piece in moving us on that impenetrable level" (20). His contention that pop music is "the domain of the hip" seems not that useful for critical appraisal. (Besides, couldn't one easily argue the contrary, that pop music is the domain of the UN-hip?)

Other essays in this volume discuss the soundtracks of *Dirty Dancing*, *Hardware*, *The Big Chill*, and *Sliding Doors*. Each of these engages close readings of the ways in which popular songs enhance various narrative and stylistic aspects of the films. Seeking to show that soundtracks can fulfill the same functions as scoring, The *Big Chill* essay contains 12 subdivisions, with good specific examples. The *Dirty Dancing* essay boasts a five-page chart detailing the precise interplay between song, shot, and dance move. However, some of the observations in these and other essays struck me as too descriptive, sometimes naïve or far-fetched. After explicating the already obvious correlation between the sappy lyrics of the pop hit "The Time of My Life" and Johnny and Baby's dance in *Dirty Dancing*, Lesley Vize asserts, "We are left in no doubt that the ability to 'let go' and

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'lose control' are important aspects of the beneficial effects of music and dance" (33). Where she sees progressive gender politics and "insight into the nascent, and largely unrecognised process of globalisation" (35), I am inclined to see mainstream cheesiness. (Likewise, her equation of authentic production design with Raymond Williams' "structure of feeling" might be reconsidered.) Drawing on Richard Dyer, Angela McRobbie, and her own experiences frequenting discotheques, she ascribes a subversive social edge to disco (and to *Dirty Dancing*) that has always struck me as way off the mark. In defense of dissing disco, I too remember the disco scene in the late 1970s, and everyone I knew felt it to be, not unlike *Dirty Dancing*, rather insipid, the ultimate in commercialism and social conformity.

The two most interesting and successful soundtrack pieces are by Anahid Kassabian and Lee Barron. Integrating the impact of new digital technologies and postmodern musical modes, Kassabian's essay seeks to expand our notion of the soundtrack, and music itself, by theorizing new sounds that blur the boundaries between sound, noise, and music. In *The Cell* and *The Matrix* she traces "a soundtrack of the unconscious" that deploys "perceived rather than objective sound" (94), where elaborate musical sound effects comprise a score with soundtrack design. Lee Barron's essay addresses the tangential but widespread phenomenon of soundtrack albums comprised of music "inspired by" (but not actually from) the film. Discussing a variety of "secondary" film soundtracks (including *The X-Files* and *The Blair Witch Project*), she accounts for the trend by drawing upon Jeff Smith's concept of "synergy" and David Harvey's "flexible accumulation." Without denying the artistic possibilities of such associative synergy, she not surprisingly uncovers "mutual profit" as "the crucial element driving the desire to associate rock and pop songs with film releases" (161).

Aside from soundtracks, some essays examine new pop music film genres, such as the dance film, the pop music biopic, and rock documentary. Phil Powrie teases out the relationship between Sting's musical career and his film roles, raising some important questions about the rock star/film star dialectic. Yet one gets the impression that at times the author is making a more complex something rather simple: Sting can't act, and he usually plays himself. Powrie's comparison throughout with David Bowie seems a bit forced and not all that relevant.

Arguing that the musical biopic deserves more critical attention, editor Ian Inglis compares two pop biopics of the Beatles, *Birth of the Beatles* (1979) and *Backbeat* (1993). He makes an interesting case that by narrativizing history, the pop music biopic solved the "problem" of the 1960s pop fiction film ("predictability and complacency"); these two films specifically employ nostalgia to foreground the pre-Beatlemania origin of the group. This essay would have benefited from at least some reckoning with their widely distinct production contexts (late 1970s America/early '90s England). The volume's final essay contains the same awkward silence, comparing 1993's *What's Love Got to Do with It?* with 1972's *Lady Sings the Blues*, without really accounting for the 20-year gulf between these two "black pop diva" biopics. Like the Sting essay, author Jaap Kooijman explores the dialectical impact of the star personas of Angela Bassett and Diana Ross on their roles as stars Tina Turner and Billie Holiday, respectively. The argument becomes somewhat muddled in trying to sustain methodological equivalence between a pop star playing a jazz singer, and an actress playing a pop star.

Two essays were rather peculiar and, in some ways, frustrating. One of these outlines the history of Finnish film in relation to popular music and American rock and roll—the author's thesis being that "they never made any rock and roll movies in Finland." Of interest here is how the Finnish film industry diluted or displaced rock with dance, comedy, or the "hit song" film genre; thus, the piece addresses rock's filmic absence more than presence. An essay on Jimi Hendrix raises some fascinating questions, especially about music being essentially visual. But, like several other pieces here, it has trouble following through, lapsing into unclear writing, tenuous speculation, and convoluted comparisons. After four pages grounded in musicology, author Anno Mungen shifts abruptly to Jimi Hendrix's performance in the documentary film *Monterey Pop* (1967). Such a film choice would seem to warrant some justification; but none is given, other than "the audiovisual medium of film is the only adequate way through which his music can be perceived" (64).

This statement caused my eyebrow to raise not a little. The ensuing analysis did not seem to distinguish adequately between the film and the actual concert performance; more attention to the codes of documentary would help. The author sees great significance in Hendrix quoting "Strangers in the Night" during a guitar solo; but this seems at odds with the essay's thesis, since it is aural, not visual. Hendrix burning his guitar is described as something that "can only be compared to the burning of books" (73). Is that really the only thing it can be compared to? Does that mean it's an act of fascism? To make so much of Hendrix's "shocking" destruction, without any reference to The Who—also featured in *Monterey Pop*, and whose more radical and theatrical concert antics predate Monterey by a few years—is perplexing, if not short-sighted. When the author concludes that the film "would lose its *raison d'être* without the music, musicians and instruments"—a somewhat banal idea the exact opposite of his original thesis—I am ready to throw up my hands.

My biggest qualm with *Popular Music and Film* is the way many essays nonchalantly shift focus: from documentary to fiction, from television to film to live performance, from synchronous sound songs to non-sync songs. Two of the essays are officially classified as "case studies," yet they appear no different from the other essays. When I tried to find an article on punk films by K. J. Donnelly listed in the bibliography, the source information proved to be incorrect. Missteps such as these render more minor errors all the more irksome (*Sid and Nancy* is 1986, not 1993; "Every Breath You Take" is a Police song, not a Sting song).

The handsome cover of *Popular Music and Film* features a still from *Moulin Rouge*. But when I looked in the index, I found the film mentioned only once. With no essay,

or even section of an essay, on this crucially important recent pop music film, the cover feels a tad misleading. So too the book's contents sometimes promise more than they deliver. Despite this, *Popular Music and Film* overall makes a salient and enthusiastic step in the right direction.

David Laderman teaches film at the College of San Mateo.

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Something Ain't Kosher Here

The Rise of the "Jewish" Sitcom

By Vincent Brook. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003. $60.00 cloth; $22.95 paper.

The very title, *Something Ain't Kosher Here: The Rise of the "Jewish" Sitcom*, suggests an obvious question: how do you define a "Jewish" sitcom? This first query will naturally expand later in the book, leading Brook to consider even more fundamental, and therefore relevant, aspects of the question. For example, what constitutes a "Jewish" identity, and how many different ways are there to define it? And once this has been defined for the purposes of his discussion, how does the author go on to contextualize his findings to make an illuminating statement about Jewish identity, as well as about changes that have occurred in American society and culture?

To answer the first of these questions, Brook offers some very clear, although certainly not inevitable, criteria. A "Jewish" sitcom is one which may exhibit any or all of the following characteristics: the protagonists are ethnically marked through a stereotypically Jewish surname, there are explicit narrative references to their Jewishness; or they have been "conceived" as Jewish by the show's creators. The temporal endpoints set by Brook to the "Jewish sitcom trend" are 1989 and 2002. Of course, he examines the "ancestors" that gave birth to the trend before going on to analyze the sitcoms that constitute the core of the discussion.

Some of the concerns that we find in *Something Ain't Kosher Here* are also foregrounded in Desser and Friedman's *American Jewish Filmmakers*, and it can be argued that Brook does for television what Desser and Friedman have done so well for film—this despite the fact that the two industries developed in ways that, while similar in trajectory, were very different in timing. While total ethnic assimilation, to the point of invisibility, was the norm in Hollywood while the studio system thrived, it gave way as early as the 1960s to a richer and more varied portrayal of ethnicity in general (and this certainly includes Jewishness), as a result of the collapse of the studio system and the civil rights movement. A similarly enriched portrayal of ethnic identity did not occur in the television industry until the 1990s.

Brook's exploration is diachronic. He starts with the pioneer television series, *The Goldbergs* (1949-1956), tracing what he terms the family's "Americanization" in order to comment on the historical moment that witnessed the exodus of a large segment of the American population from a blue-collar urban environment to the iconic suburbia of the 1950s. Brook, however, focuses on the Jewish angle and sees the ideological core of *The Goldbergs* as "extreme ambivalence over assimilation" (23). It was in fact the network executives' "aversion to being too Jewish" that dictated the show's move to "American" suburbia.

From the end of *The Goldbergs* in 1956 to the mid-1960s, Brook sees the presence of Jews on television series as being "ghettoized," or at best merely token, as writers were rationed by network executives to "one Jewish character a year" (44). Brook traces the social and political forces that redefined Jewish identity during this time period, with the representation of the Jew going from that of a passive weakling, to a perpetual victim, to the "Muscle Jew," and asks: Why did this "particularized Jewish ethno-racial project" bypass American television? (45). The answer, he suggests, has much to do with generalized surveys, nationwide ratings, sponsor pressures, and the bottom line of profit.

Significantly, when the 1970s brought a complete reversal of this situation it was again due to economic interests. As part of the emerging "ethnicoms" that surveys now indicated might be audience pleasers, "TV Jews made a comeback" with *Bridget Loves Bernie.* Brook embeds the vicissitudes of this sitcom into the larger discussion of minority groups and their right to monitor and protect their ethnic image. This emerging "image vigilantism," so prevalent today, started with the violent protests against the interfaith marriage of Bridget and Bernie.

By the time that the "Jewish sitcom trend" finally emerged in 1989 there had been many ups and downs, advances and retreats, in the Jewish presence in major television series. Not surprisingly, a good third of *Something Ain't Kosher Here* is devoted to this ebb and flow. At times the reader may feel that the author should cut to the chase, as it were, since the text appears to suffer from too much information and would thus benefit from being more streamlined. Yet, while this is true, the information is interesting, and we can argue that it makes sense to provide a richly detailed background that prepares the reader to understand the full significance of the sitcoms that ostensibly form the core material of *Something Ain't Kosher Here.*

Brook states that, after all the "false starts," when the trend finally took hold it really became an account of the ways in which *Seinfeld* redefined the 1990s and the very concept of Jewishness; although, to be sure, in the case of the latter it is difficult to say to what extent *Seinfeld* was the cause or the reflection of change in America at large. In addition to *Seinfeld*, shows like *Brooklyn Bridge*, *Singer and Son*, *Princesses*, *Anything but Love*, and *Mad About You* have contributed to the discourse on issues such as assimilation, multiculturalism, and "separate-but-equal" status, and all have negotiated the perilous gap between being "too-Jewish" and "not-Jewish-enough." This question is of major interest to Brook, and he has explicitly stated that "a Jewish sitcom trend worth the name would have to tread a fine line between 'liberal' and 'conservative' brands of 'too Jewishness' (73). He ultimately reaches the surprising conclusion that certain shows, notably *Princesses* and *Seinfeld*, attained a "universalist Jewishness

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. . . not only absorbed by, but also absorbing the surrounding culture" (99). The attenuation of Jewish identity (that he terms conceptual Jewishness), "meshes neatly with the purported affinity of postmodernity . . . for style over substance, form over content. . . ." (125). Contemporaneous with the emergence of this new notion are the alarming statistics of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, which revealed a falling away from Jewishness. Needless to say, these statistics only served to fuel the ever-present fear that the Jewish population is in serious danger of vanishing through continuous dilution. This has been termed the Silent Holocaust by some.

Brook's analysis of *The Nanny* shows that there are exceptions to any trend. First of all, *The Nanny* was one of the few Jewish sitcoms that starred a woman, a rarity since the departure of Molly Goldberg from the television screen. Secondly, in this sitcom, and specifically in Fran Drescher's performance, we have the celebration of what some have seen as the quintessential stereotype of the Jewish Princess. Not surprisingly, although the sitcom proved to be very popular with both Jews and non-Jews, there were many who were offended by it. However, *The Nanny* ushered in the dominance of women in Jewish sitcoms, and a Jewish feminist discourse. Four out of the six Jewish sitcoms that debuted between 1997 and 2002 had Jewish female protagonists. What's more, Drescher's sitcom also initiated what Brook calls the re-sexualization of the Jewish woman, erasing the previously established stereotype of her as both sexually unattractive and unresponsive. These latter sitcoms, grouped in Brook's "third phase" of the trend, evidence what he calls "post-ethnicity" (a term borrowed from David Hollinger's *Postethnic America*), a perspective that "balances an appreciation for communities of descent with a determination to make room for new communities . . . with different ethnic and racial background" (149).

In reading *Something Ain't Kosher Here*, it becomes clear that the analysis of the Jewish sitcom trend is a history of Jewish identity itself, in all its complexity, and of the place of ethnicity in America during the same period. Ultimately Brook's prognosis is an optimistic one. He sees signs of a strong Jewish representation and participation not only in the television industry, but also in film and all the arts.

Brook has produced a book that is prodigiously researched and cogently argued. However, its strength is also its weakness. The book would have had more impact had it been more compact. This is particularly visible in the first half of Chapter 7, "Un-'Dresch'-ing' the Jewish Princess," where he indulges in a discussion of feminism, fashion, masquerade, and consumerism that adds nothing to the ensuing, and much delayed, analysis of *The Nanny.* Yet overall it is an important book that clarifies and illuminates the current state of ethnicity and identity in America and makes a genuine contribution to the field of Jewish studies especially.

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The author examines each of the 14 films chronologically, with a chapter devoted to each one except for the first film, *Affaires Publiques*, which is a comic short and is dealt with somewhat briefly in the introductory chapter. A large part of the book is devoted to providing rather detailed and, as far as I can tell, quite accurate, plot summaries. I would say, though, that this in itself disqualifies the book from one of the audiences it is presumably aimed at: those unfamiliar with the films. For, surely, knowing ahead of time in detail how the story will unfold will diminish the enjoyment of a first viewing. On the other hand, for those of us who are familiar with the films, the summaries can be useful reminders, especially as the stress of the book is on thematic aspects of the films.

Even more useful is the generous amount of well-chosen, wide-ranging quotations from critics (including some with whom Cunneen disagrees), from those who worked with Bresson, and, most especially, from Bresson himself. These, together with the author's own comments, teach us many things. For example, the book rather successfully argues that Bresson's ideas on filmmaking and the concomitant conviction that film is, "a genuinely new art form," arose out of the process of his making films rather than from prior theorizing; that Bresson's undoubted aestheticism is not an arid, art-for-art's sake sort but one that aims at the exploration of mysterious aspects of reality, both cosmic and human; and that the films aim at the emotions while avoiding the manipulation of them.

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But the book does have some faults. Despite his recognition and defense of the anti-psychological nature of the films, Cunneen does not always resist the temptation to impute motives to characters. This lapse is unfortunately so common in Bressonian criticism that my citing it almost amounts to a quibble. In addition, in his discussion of *Une Femme douce (A Gentle Woman)*, Cunneen seems unaware that Bresson once said in an interview that the title was ironic, knowledge of which might well have altered Cunneen's commentary on the film. Also, at the risk of truly quibbling, I would prefer the word "mysterious" to Cunneen's "spiritual" since the latter tends to imply a didacticism that is absent from all save possibly two or three of Bresson's 14 films.

It seems to me that the major weakness of this book is the relative lack of analysis of Bresson's techniques. Since, as Cunneen explicitly acknowledges, the formal aspects of the films are responsible for the powerful and subtle way the thematic concerns are presented (or should I say revealed?), this winds up weakening even the thematic dimensions of the book. Even given the undoubted and unavoidable limits of our understanding how works of artistic genius are achieved, the book does not do nearly enough to explore how Bresson's unique technique works. To my mind, this is a serious flaw when discussing as brilliant and rigorous a formalist as Bresson.

It would be wrong to end this review on that note, however. Cunneen's book is an informative and insightful one on the themes and, to some extent, the nature of the films of Robert Bresson. Any Bressonian should be grateful for it. This one is, at least.

—Shmuel Ben-Gad

Fuller, Samuel. *A Third Face: My Tale of Writing, Fighting, and Filmmaking.* Introduction by Martin Scorsese. New York: Knopf, 2002. $35.00 cloth; $18.95 paper. "Young writers and directors, seize your audience . . . as soon as the credits hit the screen and hang on to them!" (346). That was Sam Fuller's credo, which he practiced throughout his career. *Park Row* (1952)—Fuller's affectionate tribute to the world of journalism—opens with a montage of newspaper names, reminding audiences of a time when there were 1,772 dailies, at least one of which they would know. *Pickup on South Street* (1953) starts in a crowded subway train where a petty thief stealthily removes a purse from a woman's pocketbook, little knowing that it contains a piece of valuable microfilm. Fuller chose an epigraph for *Shock Corridor* (1963): "Whom God Wishes To Destroy, He First Makes Mad. Euripides, 425 B.C." A pre-credits sequence in *The Naked Kiss* (1964) magnetizes the viewer. Fuller knew how to hook an audience. Watching a Sam Fuller film is like sitting in the front seat of a roller coaster; at the end, the rider is aesthetically exhilarated rather than emotionally drained.

A Third Face reads like a Sam Fuller movie. It is a gritty, uncompromising saga of a life lived to the hilt and often on the edge—a portrait of the artist as restless story teller, pursuing whatever medium (journalism, fiction, film) affords the best opportunity at any given moment. *Carpe diem*—in spades.

First, there was crime reporting, which took the young Fuller to the skyscrapers of New York, where a potential suicide stood on the ledge, deciding whether or not to take the big plunge, while Fuller hurled questions at the would-be "leaper" and furiously jotted down the answers in his notebook. It was Fuller, now all of 17, who scooped all the other dailies when he discovered that Jeanne Eagels had died of a drug overdose.

Morgues were not alien to Fuller. Nor was combat. He entered war's fiery furnace as a member of the First U.S. Infantry Division, known as the Big Red One—a name he would immortalize in his 1980 film of the same name. Fuller's account of his battle experiences, which includes a priceless description of a meeting with Marlene Dietrich that she later tearfully recalled, is breathtaking reportage. In fact, there is a wealth of movie material within those pages that would provide plot pegs for any screenwriter contemplating a World War II script.

Although the title Fuller has chosen for his autobiography suggests that he is speaking of his tripartite career, the full meaning is not apparent until the very end of the memoir, and has nothing to do with the various phases of his life, which went beyond three. There was Fuller the journalist, Fuller the pulp-fiction writer, Fuller the infantry man, Fuller the director of 23 feature films, all but one of which he also wrote; and Fuller, the actor, who appeared in more than 20 films.

Fuller explains the title's significance in Chapter 51. Every human being has three faces: a natural one, visible in a mirror; a persona, self-created and carefully maintained; and a hidden face that represents the true self, concealed within the persona's protective insulation. Fuller's third face was the "guardian of my secret utopias, bitter disappointments, and noble visions" (499). Although Fuller insists that no one ever gets to see another's third face, he has revealed his in this candid and deeply moving autobiography. In a genre known for "tell all" affairs, self-aggrandizement, and score-settling, *A Third Face* stands out for its integrity.

—Bernard F. Dick

Goldfarb, Brian. *Visual Pedagogy: Media Cultures In and Beyond the Classroom.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. $54.95 cloth; $18.95 paper. At the outset of his study, Brian Goldfarb announces his intention to address "a blind spot" in the work of pedagogical theorists and historians (3). This blind spot has to do with the relatively scant attention paid to the role of "the art-media-technology nexus" in pedagogical practice (3). As a result, this study carries an enormous burden as it grapples with phenomena that have resisted and continue to resist conventional boundaries in academic pursuits. The intellectual project of *Visual Pedagogy* inherently obscures divisions between education, film, television, textual analysis, and political economy. Further, while an increasing amount of academic literature has devoted attention to notions of youth and youth culture (see Henry Jenkins' *The Children's Culture Reader*, 1998), the uniqueness of this work resides in its emphasis on the video practices of young people themselves and on the broader

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A Third Face reads like a Sam Fuller movie. It is a gritty, uncompromising saga of a life lived to the hilt and often on the edge—a portrait of the artist as restless story teller, pursuing whatever medium (journalism, fiction, film) affords the best opportunity at any given moment. *Carpe diem*—in spades.

First, there was crime reporting, which took the young Fuller to the skyscrapers of New York, where a potential suicide stood on the ledge, deciding whether or not to take the big plunge, while Fuller hurled questions at the would-be "leaper" and furiously jotted down the answers in his notebook. It was Fuller, now all of 17, who scooped all the other dailies when he discovered that Jeanne Eagels had died of a drug overdose.

Morgues were not alien to Fuller. Nor was combat. He entered war's fiery furnace as a member of the First U.S. Infantry Division, known as the Big Red One—a name he would immortalize in his 1980 film of the same name. Fuller's account of his battle experiences, which includes a priceless description of a meeting with Marlene Dietrich that she later tearfully recalled, is breathtaking reportage. In fact, there is a wealth of movie material within those pages that would provide plot pegs for any screenwriter contemplating a World War II script.

Although the title Fuller has chosen for his autobiography suggests that he is speaking of his tripartite career, the full meaning is not apparent until the very end of the memoir, and has nothing to do with the various phases of his life, which went beyond three. There was Fuller the journalist, Fuller the pulp-fiction writer, Fuller the infantry man, Fuller the director of 23 feature films, all but one of which he also wrote; and Fuller, the actor, who appeared in more than 20 films.

Fuller explains the title's significance in Chapter 51. Every human being has three faces: a natural one, visible in a mirror; a persona, self-created and carefully maintained; and a hidden face that represents the true self, concealed within the persona's protective insulation. Fuller's third face was the "guardian of my secret utopias, bitter disappointments, and noble visions" (499). Although Fuller insists that no one ever gets to see another's third face, he has revealed his in this candid and deeply moving autobiography. In a genre known for "tell all" affairs, self-aggrandizement, and score-settling, *A Third Face* stands out for its integrity.

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But the book does have some faults. Despite his recognition and defense of the anti-psychological nature of the films, Cunneen does not always resist the temptation to impute motives to characters. This lapse is unfortunately so common in Bressonian criticism that my citing it almost amounts to a quibble. In addition, in his discussion of *Une Femme douce (A Gentle Woman)*, Cunneen seems unaware that Bresson once said in an interview that the title was ironic, knowledge of which might well have altered Cunneen's commentary on the film. Also, at the risk of truly quibbling, I would prefer the word "mysterious" to Cunneen's "spiritual" since the latter tends to imply a didacticism that is absent from all save possibly two or three of Bresson's 14 films.

It seems to me that the major weakness of this book is the relative lack of analysis of Bresson's techniques. Since, as Cunneen explicitly acknowledges, the formal aspects of the films are responsible for the powerful and subtle way the thematic concerns are presented (or should I say revealed?), this winds up weakening even the thematic dimensions of the book. Even given the undoubted and unavoidable limits of our understanding how works of artistic genius are achieved, the book does not do nearly enough to explore how Bresson's unique technique works. To my mind, this is a serious flaw when discussing as brilliant and rigorous a formalist as Bresson.

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implications of notions of pedagogy and "development" as they link up with visual culture and the moving image.

Visual Pedagogy is split into two halves. The first half is concerned with the deployment of visual technologies in the classroom. Key subjects addressed in the first two chapters include the U.S. government's experiments in educational television in Samoan classrooms in the early sixties as well as the turn toward the moving image in 1980s American classrooms. The last three chapters of *Visual Pedagogy* expand the relevance of the connection between moving images and educational practices. Reaching beyond the work of moving-image production by and for young people in particular, Goldfarb demonstrates the force of the moving image's relation to pedagogy by looking at museums, colonial and anti-colonial pursuits in West Africa, as well as alternative television in Brazil. Particularly interesting is this last case study: the short-lived experience of Sao Paulo's TV Anhembi—an unusual instance of grassroots video activism and governmental professionalism. For Goldfarb, TV Anhembi represents new possibilities for coalitional arrangements which link up the local and the national, the grassroots and the state.

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The book is a virtual tour of the area and its dubious cinematic offerings, with each chapter highlighting a particular "grindhouse" theater and the genres in which it specialized. The Empire, for instance—now part of the AMC cineplex franchise—was a haven for provocative race-based melodramas. Such details are fascinating, so it's disappointing when Landis and Clifford resort to synopsizing dozens of Deuce movies. Their evaluations rarely rise above the banal ("Candice Rialson is the blonde pricktease princess in the halter top, bell-bottoms, and platform shoes . . . but that only made her more special and dreamy"), and the material's overarching misogyny is given a near-complete pass.

That said, you can almost forgive them for eschewing careful examination. Movies like *Last House on Dead End Street* and *Farewell Uncle Tom* sound uniquely punishing to watch, and the motives of their creators are frequently terrifying to ponder (Staten Island micro-mogul Andy Milligan comes across as particularly repugnant). The authors instead excel at detailing the various institutions and relationships that thrived on the Deuce—not least the one between the films and their audiences. Even better, there's little in the way of the "so bad it's good" condescension that mars sim-

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ilar tomes. Should you ever find yourself in search of genuine "old" New York, you could do worse than *Sleazoid Express* as your guide.

—Mark Holcomb

Liber, George O. *Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film.* London: BFI Publishing, 2002. $58.00. In this book George O. Liber takes up the difficult task of writing a biography of a film director, which is supposed to account for both Dovzhenko's life and his films. Liber's story, narrated primarily as a struggle between Dovzhenko's internal aspirations and the pressure of external conditions, is based on numerous archival materials as diverse as secret police reports and Dovzhenko's scattered diaries, and on various published documents and scholarly works. Liber's biography is first and foremost a story of Dovzhenko's interaction with his time, with the political milieu of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, which had a fundamental impact on both Dovzhenko's life and work.

Liber also offers an analysis of each of Dovzhenko's films and literary works in which he distinguishes between the elements that stem from Dovzhenko's authentic imagination and those included in order to comply with the official policy. However, the clear-cut distinction between the internal and the external gets complicated in the course of the book and the role of the Stalinist political system in Dovzhenko's life and work becomes ambivalent: Dovzhenko's intensive interaction with the official line is described as detrimental for his creativity but at the same time it is presented as a continuous interpretative effort rather than a simple adherence to a rigid set of rules. This effort on Dovzhenko's part was straining and painful, but it could also be called productive.

A similar ambiguity is also characteristic of Dovzhenko's Ukrainian identity and his relations with the dominant Russian culture. Although Liber does not theoretically elaborate on these ambiguities, his book forms a complex picture in the mind of an attentive reader. Liber apparently fails to come to a coherent picture of Dovzhenko's relations with his epoch, but this very failure is, probably, the most valuable characteristic of his book. By allowing ambivalences, Liber becomes adequate to his hero who, in Liber's own words, "embraced complexity and ambiguity" thereby "alienating groups with a monochromic orthodox view of the world" (113).

—Andrey Shcherbenok

D'Agostino Lloyd, Annette. *The Harold Lloyd Encyclopedia.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003. $65.00 With hindsight, silent comedian Harold Lloyd seems to epitomize the American 1920s. An ambitious, unafraid, rollicking go-getter, he was symbolic of a knockabout but deeply conservative era. As film historian Roger Manvell wrote, Lloyd was "the all-American boy—bold, brash, thick-skinned and bound for success despite the superficial diffidence and prissy manners." For the author (no relation), he remains an example to young Americans. Whilst the unabashed appeal to a contemporary generation seems a mite optimistic, this book is so assiduously researched that it could become a key resource. It will be interesting, however, to see if it prompts fresh interest, popular or academic, in one of the great figures of early American comedy.

Emerging from the legitimate theater rather than the vaudeville that spawned Chaplin, Keaton and Langdon, by the mid-20s Lloyd was briefly the highest paid actor in Hollywood. President Harding himself, ailing and beset with corruption, found the young man's single-mindedness a tonic. But Lloyd's peers have gleaned the lion's share of critical attention. Gripping and efficient, but obvious in their appeal, Lloyd's "thrill pictures" do not appear to resonate beyond the commercial imperatives of the moment. Yet the frenetic logistics of the skyscraper stunt in *Safety Last* (1923)—fully documented here—historically located these antics in a way that Chaplin and Keaton's staginess did not. In more than one sense, Lloyd responded to his historical moment, and in a scrupulously researched and detailed compendium of Lloydiana, the author paints a portrait of a booming society itching to stake its claim on the century.

—Stephen Charbonneau

Mesce, Bill Jr. *Peckinpah's Women: A Reappraisal of the Portrayal of Women in the Period Westerns of Sam Peckinpah.* Lanham, MD: *Scarecrow Press*, 2001. $47.00. Despite the promising nature of the title, Mesce makes no attempt to save Peckinpah for feminism but instead wishes to re-evaluate the director in terms of the contemporary issues of gender and industry that affected his work. He also points out that Peckinpah's portrayal of women may not only contain some historically accurate images but may also positively contrast with his critical perceptions of the male hero. It is an interesting thesis, but poorly developed.

Unfortunately, the author has made no attempt to consult recent critical articles and books dealing with the director that could have provided a broader context for his arguments. For example, he cites the first edition of Paul Seydor's work and seems oblivious to the fact that a revised and updated edition appeared several years ago. Although Marshall Fine's *Bloody Sam* receives copious references, no mention is made of David Weddle's 1994 biography. Despite the author's valuable experience in film and television, this industrial context is, sadly, not enough to recommend this book as the pioneering study that it really should be.

—Tony Williams

Wollen, Peter. *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film.* London: Verso, 2002. $60.00 cloth; $20.00 paper. This new collection of 19 essays from Peter Wollen, written over the last ten years, spans an unusually wide range of topics. Its three parts—"Directors and Film-makers," "Film and Movements," and "Themes and Styles"—reflects this range, moving from specific auteurs and films to discussions of broader issues such as the aesthetics of cinema and the space of narrative. In a writing style that is often anecdotal, these pieces unfold naturally and inevitably, making reading somehow akin to hearing a friend tell a good story. A chance meeting

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between Mark Peploe, who co-wrote *The Passenger* with Wollen, and the architect Rem Koolhaas cleverly illustrates the importance of the role of coincidence in narrative. A story about Wollen's infant son and his small role in Yvonne Rainer's 1980 *Journeys from Berlin* serves as an example in an essay on experimental film and the mismatch between image and voice. An astonishing range of experiences, within and without the academy, are brought to bear here. And at the same time, personal anecdotes are balanced by historical contextualization and sometimes even raw data and statistics. British "New Wave" cinema of the 1980s is, for example, contextualized in relationship to Thatcherism, in order to situate the individual career trajectories of Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman. Top Ten lists and average shot lengths are cited in another essay to illustrate shifts in the canonization of individual films and finally the experience of filmic temporality.

Given the rich range of topics in *Paris Hollywood*, the juxtaposition of its title deserves further consideration. In the field of film studies, one quickly associates these cities with a particular set of discursive trajectories within cinema studies. In this sense the two geographic poles, Paris and Hollywood, point to critical paradigms that have traditionally structured the field—art versus commerce, new wave practices versus mainstream, counter-cinema versus hegemony. These dialogues between art and entertainment have perennially beleaguered the cinema since its beginnings. However, the essays also seem to gesture beyond such conventional binarizations without totally relinquishing the force of them. A few times throughout the book, for instance, Wollen unabashedly holds out for the redemptive power of art and the potential for realizing an autonomous aesthetics of cinema. At another moment he quite openly calls himself a "child of 'auteurism.'" But Wollen seems to deploy such categories of film studies with an added awareness and consideration of the ways in which they have appropriated and institutionalized specific filmic objects as part of its critical landscape. So while individual pieces devoted to Godard and Hawks are included—where the auteur is inextricably linked to his respective city—others deal with the importance of figures and events that will foreground other places—Vienna, New York, London. Paris and Hollywood, as designating important cinematic cities and traditions, are in effect decentralized. The implications of Wollen's essay, "Architecture and Film: Places and Non-places," turn out to be especially significant in this regard. In lieu of letting postmodernism simply homogenize and level the geo-paradigmatic differences between Paris and Hollywood, these paradigms are extended into the present moment and rethought in order to produce more astonishing and novel insights. On the way, spaces of possibility are opened up. And in these creative essays, Wollen does not hesitate in (re)visiting these spaces.

—Steve Choe